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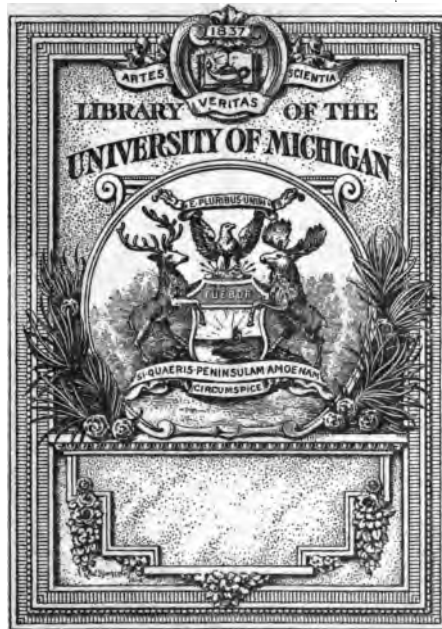
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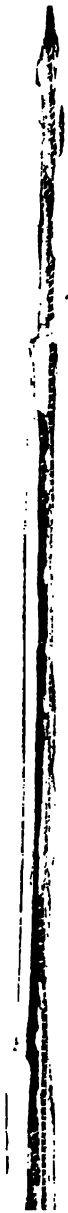
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*Abraham Lincoln*

AMERICAN CRISIS BIOGRAPHIES

# ABRAHAM LINCOLN

by

ELLIS PAXSON OBERHOLTZER, Ph.D.

Author of "Robert Morris, Patriot and Financier,"

"The Referendum in America," etc.



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## PREFACE

AN apology may be needed for another biography sent out to join the multiplying number of written and published lives of Abraham Lincoln. To many it may have seemed that the last word was said long since, and that nothing of value can now be added to the record. I am not certain that I have justified myself in the present effort to contradict that no doubt wide-spread belief. I claim for these chapters no vast amount of research into sources not before used by Lincoln's biographers. So thoroughly and well has this labor been performed by others that nothing of value can be hoped for from this exercise. Nicolay and Hay's ten volumes of history, supplemented by two volumes of the Civil War President's letters and speeches, leave little to be done in that direction. Because of the exhaustiveness of their study and the minutiae of the information they have brought to light, theirs will always be regarded as the first work of reference upon Lincoln. They have given us the closest view of his official life—but as private secretaries who knew him as young men, as very worshipful admirers of him, and as good haters of the other side. Herndon is our foremost authority for Lincoln's earlier life, especially in Springfield,

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and if the President is not so attractive a hero in the eyes of a neighbor, a law partner, an early friend, and in a fuller sense, a contemporary than either Mr. Nicolay or Mr. Hay, it is no subject for great wonder. Other printed works upon Lincoln are impressions like my own,—some by contemporaries and some by younger men, some by confessed admirers and some by students, who have approached their subject in the true spirit of the historian. In spite of a plenitude of biographical material, it has seemed to me that there was lack of a readable, compact life of Lincoln by one who never saw him,—born indeed well after his day,—by one who knows him only for what he did, and who, therefore, may be in the temper to form an impression that is unbiased, and it may be hoped also just. I have approached him in no spirit of worship, and have found much in him that does not well conform with my own ideals for humanity. These minor defects of character, however, have not prevented me from appreciating the genius that always burned as a bright flame, and burns still to illumine the way of the American nation adown the centuries.

The series of volumes, of which this is the first, was planned to give an impartial twentieth century view of the greatest event in the life of the nation in the nineteenth century. The men of the South who in 1860 did not share the views of the men of the North will be estimated by the Southern stand-

ards of this later time—by historians of their own section and of this generation. These Southern appreciations of Southern leaders are admitted freely and will be accepted as just by the editor of the series, and I hope, also, by the public into whose hands the volumes fall. We of the North bespeak the same attention for our volumes in the hands of Southern readers.

My own antecedents are all Northern and my sympathies, had I lived in that time, would have been with the North as against negro slavery, and the strict constructionist and State-Rights view of the Constitution. These facts, however, cannot prevent me from appreciating honesty of motive, sincerity of purpose, political talent and sagacity, military valor, and patience under great suffering after the war, on the part of the Southern people. Much of what they did, when the final estimate is given, must make us feel very proud that we are sprung from a common stock, that our destiny was the same before the great difference arose, and that it is to be one henceforward. They are a part of us, and we are a part of them, together ennobled, very likely, by the trial, as Lincoln was by sore distress, for the tasks to be performed side by side in this century.

That the work of setting the Civil War before the present generation of readers needs to be done I have long firmly believed, and it is now undertaken with a sincere desire to execute the plan as dispassionately, as authoritatively, and at the same time

as entertainingly, as the proportions of the task and the conditions of book-writing and publishing permit. For our failures, if there be these, we bespeak the merciful consideration that man owes to man, North owes to South, South owes to North, and nation owes to other nations. Perfection of judgment and full agreement in opinion and thought we have never had, and can never enjoy except at a sacrifice of variety, without which human existence would soon grow very monotonous for all of us. Let it be said, however, when we begin, that we are trying to do the best the frailties induced by upbringing in our separate sections will allow: when we have finished that we have done as well as Northern and Southern men could be expected to do in formulating and uttering their judgments of each other.

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## CHRONOLOGY

- 1806—Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks married, June 12, in Kentucky.
- 1809—Birth of Abraham Lincoln, February 12, in Hardin, now La Rue County, Ky.
- 1816—Removal to Indiana, where the family settled in the neighborhood of Gentryville.
- 1818—Death of Abraham Lincoln's mother.
- 1828—First trip in a flatboat to New Orleans.
- 1830—Removal of the Lincolns to Macon County, Illinois.
- 1831—Second trip to New Orleans, returning from which Abraham leaves his father's cabin behind him and settles in New Salem, a small town on the Sangamon River, to become a clerk in Denton Offutt's store.
- 1832—Announces his candidacy for the Illinois Legislature, and enlists for the Black Hawk War. Upon his return he is defeated for the Legislature, the only defeat he ever suffered at the hands of the people. Establishes the firm of Berry and Lincoln, "grocery keepers" in New Salem.
- 1833—Appointed postmaster in New Salem. Closes the "grocery" later, to study surveying and read law.
- 1834—Elected to the Illinois Legislature by a large majority.
- 1835—Death of his first love, Anne Rutledge.
- 1836—Reelected to the Legislature.
- 1837—Settles in Springfield, the county seat, to take up the practice of law with Major John T. Stuart.
- 1838—Reelected to the Legislature, in which he is the Whig candidate for Speaker of the House of Representatives.

- 1840—Reelected to the Legislature, again to be his party's candidate for Speaker. "Stumps" the State for "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too."
- 1841—Forms law partnership with Stephen T. Logan under the firm name of Logan and Lincoln.
- 1842—Duel with James Shields, and marriage, November 4, to Mary Todd.
- 1844—Heads Illinois' electoral ticket for Henry Clay, the Whig candidate for president.
- 1845—Law firm of Lincoln and Herndon organized.
- 1846—Elected to Congress over Peter Cartwright, frontier evangelist and Democrat.
- 1848—"Stumps" the Eastern States for Zachary Taylor.
- 1849—Failure to secure the appointment as Commissioner of the General Land Office. Offered the governorship of Oregon, which he declines.
- 1854—The principle of popular sovereignty proclaimed, and the first of Lincoln's debates with Stephen A. Douglas on the slavery question. Again chosen to the Legislature, but resigns to become the "Anti-Nebraska" candidate for United States Senator, withdrawing in favor of Lyman Trumbull, who is elected.
- 1856—Joins the Republican party, and receives 110 votes for vice-president on the first Republican national ticket headed by John C. Fremont.
- 1858—Contests Douglas's seat in the United States Senate in a remarkable series of debates, but fails of election by a narrow majority.
- 1859—Speaks for the Republicans of Ohio at Columbus and Cincinnati, and visits Kansas.
- 1860—Cooper Institute Speech in New York City in February, followed by a tour of New England with speeches in Connecticut, Rhode Island and New Hampshire. Illinois Republicans at Decatur make him their candidate for president. Nominated for the presidency at the Chicago Convention over William H. Seward of New York, and elected as the "Rail Candidate" in November.

- 1861—Leaves Springfield for Washington, speaking at many points in Indiana, Ohio, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania on his way. Inaugurated president of the United States, March 4. Assault upon Fort Sumter, April 12, and beginning of the war. Disastrous Federal reverse at Bull Run on July 21. Calls for troops. Seizure of Mason and Slidell, and a narrow escape from war with Great Britain.
- 1862—McClellan's advance into Virginia for the unsuccessful Peninsular Campaign. Pope's undoing at the second battle of Bull Run, and the battle of Antietam, which checked Lee's northern movement. Emancipation policy announced September 22. McClellan relieved from duty to be followed by Burnside.
- 1863—Emancipation proclaimed January 1. The disaster at Fredericksburg. Appointment of Hooker to command the Army of the Potomac. The battle of Chancellorsville and Lee's determination to invade the North. Meade supersedes Hooker. The battle of Gettysburg, July 1, 2, and 3, by which the Confederates are driven South again. Grant's capture of Vicksburg, July 4, and his appointment to command all the Western armies. The victories around Chattanooga.
- 1864—Grant appointed Lieutenant-General and Commander-in-Chief in February. Lincoln renominated for the presidency. The bloody battles of the Wilderness, and Grant's march to Petersburg. Sheridan's operations in the Shenandoah Valley. Sherman's capture of Atlanta, and his march to the sea. Election of Lincoln for a second term over McClellan, the Democratic candidate.
- 1865—Thirteenth Amendment passed by Congress and referred to the States. Hampton Roads' conference with Confederate Commissioners, February 3. Lee's evacuation of Richmond and his surrender to Grant, April 9. Lincoln visits Richmond, returning from which he is shot by John Wilkes Booth in Ford's Theatre, Washington, April 14. Death April 15, and burial in Springfield, Illinois, May 4.





# ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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## CHAPTER I

### EARLY LIFE

IN the crisis that arose in the affairs of the American states, arraying section against section in a trial of the fundamental nature of the Union for the sake of the black slave, and for the preservation or overthrow of the economic system of which he was the basic part, the opportunity was afforded for the unfolding of as many different types of character as can well be compacted into human form. It was not a struggle developed in a day to reveal the ambition and contribute to the glory of a Cæsar or a Napoleon. It was a difference of slow development. It reached its crucial point naturally, and no hand could stay the inevitable conflict. There was no man, woman or child on either side in the struggle whose sympathies were not moved more or less strongly, who did not feel the pinch of poverty, the weight of sorrow and distress, and did not sigh for peace with victory, or that boon without victory, long before the desirable result was attained.

One man there was, however, who by reason of the position to which he was called by his fellows, coupled with his own sensitive and responsive temperament, carried upon his Atlantean shoulders the whole nation's share of burdens on the Union side. What are the ingredients of greatness in men can never be known since no two have been or will ever be great in the same way, and what were the characteristics which raised Abraham Lincoln to place with everlasting claim upon the world's attention will be a subject of discussion with his biographers for many generations. / His wanton assassination at a time of public excitement raised up eulogists on every hand, and years of graceless nonentity as an ex-president saved him from semi-oblivion and the possible detraction growing out of later movements, which sometimes neutralize the impression created by the most brilliant career. While his great, generous nature was needed, as Lord Russell declared in the British House of Lords after the perpetration of Wilkes Booth's crime, "to temper the pride of victory and assuage the misfortunes which his adversaries had experienced," the degree of wisdom he would have brought to the difficult problem of reconstruction is a mystery that will never be solved. Moreover the cause Lincoln led, was overwhelmingly successful, though only after years through which hope and despair surged up and down the country in alternating currents. Victory more quickly gained would have made the final achievement

seem vastly less important. With the victory came the triumph of a large national idea which will always appeal to the imagination and the sense of right of multitudes of people. / In the process of preserving the Union he had emancipated nearly four millions of Africans and wiped slavery off the map of the civilized world, forwarding a movement long recommended by sentiments of humanity and releasing, as time has shown, a large and fruitful area from bondage to a scheme of labor unjustified and unjustifiable by any modern system of political economy.

If some of these things are accidents so is all human existence an accident. Birth, gaunt strength, political sagacity, friendships, nominations, elections, life in the midst of conspiracy are all in a sense accidental. / So long as there are American boys who are taught at their mother's knee that their destiny is the White House, the story of Lincoln's life will have its fascinations. He was a man of the people in their humblest walks. / Few who have attained height have had so great a distance to rise. With no adventitious aid, though for long his progress was slow, his native powers which he assiduously cultivated, coupled with his opportunities, brought him the recognition he courted and deserved to win.

He came of a long line of pioneers. Samuel Lincoln, the immigrant ancestor reached Massachusetts from Norwich, England, in 1638. Through Mordecai and his son Mordecai, who removed first to

New Jersey and then to Berks County, Pennsylvania, about sixty miles northwest of Philadelphia; John who in 1750 settled in Rockingham County on the present western border of old Virginia we reach Abraham Lincoln, the grandfather of the sixteenth President of the United States. Before the American Revolution had yet ended, this Abraham Lincoln was attracted to Kentucky through his friendship for Daniel Boone, took up some virgin tracts in Jefferson County near the present site of Louisville and, returning to his old home, wound up his affairs and emigrated with his family to this new land of promise. He had been in Kentucky but a short time when in 1784, while working in some cleared land with his sons, an Indian picked him off with a shot from the bush. An older son ran to the cabin for the rifle and, aiming it well, avenged the death of his father just as the savage came out of cover to attack the youngest boy, Thomas, a child six years old, left beside the corpse. Thomas, who thus saw his father die and who so narrowly escaped with his own life, became twenty-five years later the father of Abraham Lincoln, the American war president, named for this sturdy frontiersman who fell a prey to the bloodthirst of the Kentucky Indian. The wife, left with a family of children in a wild country, abandoned land claims of large future value and settled in Washington County in central Kentucky, a more populous region, where the children grew to man and womanhood, totally illiterate. Thomas, who

became a carpenter, could not write his own name when he married Nancy Hanks, his employer's niece, June 12, 1806, although under her instruction he later learned to form his letters.

Thomas brought his young wife no fortune ; she brought him no dower. Few young couples in the backwoods were so poor, and their condition underwent no improvement. The head of the family was migratory and thriftless, a rolling stone gathering nothing to him. After the birth of one child, a daughter Sarah, he removed westwardly to a place in Hardin, now La Rue County, Kentucky, built a cabin on a small, rocky and unfruitful farm where on February 12, 1809, the second child, Abraham, entered a world long to be to him a bleak home full of poverty, hard manual labor and the coarsest personal experience.

On this farm the Lincolns remained for four years when they removed a short distance to another of greater size and better promise, but it was not long before Thomas' restless spirit lured him away again. This time his destination was another state, Indiana. Loading his kit of tools and four hundred gallons of whiskey upon a rude raft he floated down the tributaries of the Ohio to that river and then west on its broader surfaces to the country he had in view. Once his raft capsized, when he lost most of his whiskey ; although he fished out his tools, and after visiting the wilderness which had attracted him from Kentucky, fixed upon a site for his new home in Perry County near the present town of

Gentryville. Returning on foot for his family he brought them and all his earthly possessions on the backs of two borrowed horses into the Indiana timber, leaving them through one winter with no shelter but a shed built of poles, open to the frosts and snows upon one side. Even when a cabin took the place of this rude "camp" he left it for two or three years without floor, doors or windows.

Here in the primeval American wood Abraham Lincoln spent his boyhood. His bed was of leaves raised from the ground by poles, resting upon one side in the interstices of the logs of which the hut was built, and upon the other in crotches of sticks driven into the earth. The skins of animals afforded almost the only covering allowed this truly miserable family. Their food was of the simplest and coarsest variety and very scarce. So black appeared this period in Lincoln's life, though he was one whose pride did not take him far above his origins, that he later never of his own choice reverted to it. Among all those who listened to his reminiscence and anecdote, not one recalls having heard more than the barest allusion to these dark years. Many old frontiersmen in America hark back with happiness in their eyes to the good old times when they slept in attics, rising before daybreak to find heaps of snow upon their beds and to warm their bare feet of frosty mornings in the spots vacated by cows in the field as the animals were brought in for the milking; but so painful was Lincoln's recollection of his squalid boyhood and its woeful lack of light

that he was content to let it be a forgotten chapter.

Nor did he of choice often refer to the period, though it was somewhat better, which immediately followed. Succumbing to the border hardships the wife and mother died in the autumn of 1818 of an epidemic which the people knew as "milk sick" and which seems to have been a violent fever. It first attacked the cattle, coming perhaps from their eating a poisonous herb, and then ravaged the human family, terminating fatally in a few days. Doctors, medicines and even the tolerably decent comforts of life were many miles away from this isolated camp. Thomas Lincoln made the coffin with his own hands, the grave was dug in a cleared space in the forest and there Nancy Hanks Lincoln was buried. It was months after before it was practicable to secure a preacher who, when he came, gathered the family about him in the wood and spoke a few words over the mound of sod.

It was not long before Thomas Lincoln returned to his old home in Kentucky and despite his reputation for thriftlessness and the unattractiveness of the home he had to offer, made his loss good very promptly by bringing out Sally Bush Johnston, an old flame, now the widow with several children of the jailer of Hardin County. With her came some bedding, woolen clothing, a few pieces of furniture and living utensils, a kind motherly manner and the ability and will to put her husband to work. He was persuaded to add doors and windows to the



cabin, and the new wife's influence for good was manifested in many directions.

It was an odd community life. With Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks had come two Hanks boys from Kentucky and other kin, while Mrs. Johnston now contributed her three children and by marriages from time to time with the neighbors a very heterogeneous group was brought together under the cabin roof. Some members of the family joined the Baptist church. Abe, through his step-mother's mediation, was enabled to attend school for a few months in the winter, when work upon the farm did not press, and his father would consent to what from his point of view was a useless expenditure of time. Primitive indeed were these early Indiana schools. Teachers who themselves were far from wise, taught in log houses with mud floors the "three R's" or as Lincoln later described the curriculum "readin', writin' and cipherin' to the Rule of Three." He used to say when fame had come that he never attended school for more than six months in his life—in no spirit of boastfulness like many a self-made American, but with regret that was deeply felt. He lay by the fireplace at night ciphering with a piece of charcoal upon the wooden shovel which he cleaned off with his father's plane the next day, that it might be useful to him again for the same purpose. He worked out his sums on the logs and clapboards of the little cabin, evidencing the fondness for mathematics marked with him through life. His father, who

aimed to teach him carpentry thought him lazy ; if he had more than the child's natural portion of his parent's shiftless indolence, it little became Thomas Lincoln to preach strenuous living.

They had come from that class, as the President freely declared at Washington, which was called in the South "the scrubs" or poor whites, and nothing the father was ever likely to do would improve their social position. "My early life," Abraham Lincoln used to say, "may be described as

" 'The short and simple annals of the poor.' "

No higher school or college ; no libraries or theatres ; no clubs or games ; no comfortable or fashionable clothing ; no fine or even wholesome foods ; no opportunities of travel or observation were the lot and portion of Abraham Lincoln in a community in which the lives of the people were sordid and narrow, and in which so much ignorance prevailed that his only sister at the age of fourteen was permitted to marry a man named Grigsby, laying down her life a year or two later in childbirth.

But into Abe's soul a little light was streaming. He got hold of a copy of "Æsop's Fables," read "Robinson Crusoe" and borrowed Weems' "Life of Washington," filling his mind with the hatchet story and other details in the life of the father of his country, introduced by that rather untrustworthy historian. One night after he had climbed up the

pegs, which served as a ladder to his lodgings in the attic, he hid the book under the rafters. The rain which came in before morning soaked the leaves so that he was compelled to go to the farmer from whom he had procured it and offer to make good the loss. That little philanthropic man exacted as its price three days' work in a corn-field, and at the end of that time the damaged volume came into the boy's absolute possession.

The books within his reach were read and re-read with avidity. He learned them by heart, made notes from them in his copy-books, wrote compositions and rude doggerel, and declaimed from time to time to the men in the harvest field, at house raisings, log-rollings and wolf hunts. He, however, was less likely to impress the rough folk around him with a sense of being something apart from them by his greater learning than by his superior size and strength. When he was eighteen or nineteen he had attained practically his full height which was about six feet four inches. He was familiarly known as "Long Shanks." He shot up into the air much faster than his clothing could be altered to keep pace, and for years after there was a kind of hiatus between his trousers and the tops of his brogans, which the frontier tailors were unable to fill in. Strong as an ox he early engaged in feats of muscle, lifting logs, wrestling with other boys in the neighborhood,—a lank, awkward Herculean farm-hand who, if he had read two or three books unknown by his fellows, was still not

seriously regarded as likely material for a President of the United States. "He could strike with an axe," says an old companion, "a heavier blow than any man. He could sink an axe deeper than any of his fellows."

When nineteen years old an opportunity presented itself for a trip to New Orleans. Chiefly by his own labor he had raised a quantity of produce for which the family desired a market, and an arrangement was made with Mr. Gentry, the man of affairs in the near-by village of Gentryville, by which he agreed to furnish a flatboat, complete the cargo and send along his son to assist in navigating the primitive vessel and in disposing of the goods. An incident occurred upon this journey to which Lincoln often afterward referred. Through this boat he earned his first dollar. The river steamers in those days took on their passengers in mid-stream. There were no wharves at which to land, and two men who came down to the shore with their trunks engaged him to scull them out into the current. They paid him a dollar for the service, a larger sum of money than he had ever up to that time been able to call his own.

The voyage in other respects was not uneventful. When near Baton Rouge, Lincoln and his companion, after tying up for the night, were attacked by some black ruffians. Abraham soon put them to flight with a club. His powerful arm, the gang, though large, could not withstand. Several of the men were knocked overboard, and the two Hoosier boys

pursued them some distance in shore, returning to release their boat from its moorings and seek safer quarters down-stream for the rest of the night.

Thomas Lincoln had remained in Indiana longer than any one who knew him had right to anticipate. In 1830 he was off again for the alluring West, and settled in Illinois where Abraham was destined to make his career in his country's politics. Always in the wash of the waves as they beat into the West in the great movement of immigrants the Lincoln household was again set in motion. John Hanks, the most reliable male member of this motley family, had gone to Macon County the year before and on his representations Thomas Lincoln made over his mortgaged farm to Mr. Gentry in the village, packed his effects in a wagon drawn by a double yoke of oxen and with all his kin in his train set out through forest and over prairie for the new state. Coming to John Hanks' place they selected a tract of land near him on the north fork of the Sangamon River. Here a new cabin was to be built of logs and Abraham, assisted by Hanks, with an axe felled a number of walnut trees, splitting enough rails to fence in fifteen acres, thereby establishing a reputation which thirty years later strengthened him immensely with the "plain people" from whom he sprang and whose votes were needed to put him into the place where he could apply his political genius to the task of preserving the Union of the American States.

At this time Illinois contained a population of about 150,000; Chicago was little more than a straggling village around a fort on Lake Michigan. The state literally leaped into wealth and prosperity and in 1860 its most distinguished citizen, the rail-splitter of thirty years before was one of 1,700,000 people. Lincoln went forward with it, one of its true sons, his ear to the ground for the *vox populi*, following all the ramifications of mind and conscience by which that thing—vague and incomprehensible—is created and finds expression. The new cabin, the new rail fence, and all the Hankses and Lincolns in Illinois were at once obliged to face the most severe winter which settlers there had ever experienced. It was “the winter of the deep snow.” The first months of 1831 were marked by what we would to-day call a blizzard, but the cold which set in after an unprecedented fall of snow was prolonged, and the pioneers in this section suffered excruciating privations. For weeks they were prisoners in their log huts.

When young Lincoln got out of the burrow, in which he had perforce consumed much valuable time, he made the acquaintance of an adventurous frontier trader named Denton Offutt. The latter having been told of the maritime skill of the lad from Indiana, gained in the navigation of the Mississippi, fitted out the future War President, John Johnston, the idle son of Abe’s stepmother, and John Hanks for another voyage to New Orleans.

The boys were obliged first to build their boat from timber still uncut on government land, launch it in the Sangamon and float it down the current to New Salem, a village which had suddenly arisen on the banks of that stream and which as suddenly disappeared after Lincoln on his return from Louisiana had found a home there and a constituency willing to encourage his political ambitions for a period of seven years. The boat very promptly caught fast upon the breast of a mill-dam. It was Lincoln who released the craft and its crew from their sensational predicament by a plan of his own devising, which nearly twenty years later he made the basis of an invention "for lifting vessels over shoals." A model of what seems to have been for all general purposes an entirely useless contrivance was patented and still reposes in the government collection at Washington. This voyage, like that of three years before, was accomplished successfully and the members of the party, finding passage on the return as far as St. Louis, continued their journey home on foot, a wearisome tramp which only young blood could enjoy.

Abraham was now of age and free from further obligations to build rail fences for his father. The debt of youth was paid, and he looked about him for opportunity to make himself more than Thomas Lincoln was or ever could be. In August, 1831, he left the cabin behind him forever and settled in New Salem on the Sangamon to become a clerk in a store which Offutt, the man who had capitalized

the New Orleans venture, proposed to establish in that village. Meantime he "clerked" an election and piloted a boat through perilous places in the river for a man who was removing his family and his worldly goods to Texas. In Offutt's store Lincoln seems first to have won his title, "Honest Abe." When he innocently made mistakes in changing money or his packages of goods were under weight, he locked his till and pursued his customers to make the necessary amends.

It was in New Salem, too, that Lincoln gained his wide repute for "rassling." To the young men in the West of that time wrestling matches were what football, baseball and other athletic games are to boys to-day. This sport furnished almost the only vent for youthful spirits and the love of muscular competition. Near the town, in a strip of timber called Clary's Grove, resided a number of brutal rowdies with whom Lincoln soon came into close relations. Under pretense of regulating the morals of the neighborhood they insulted, attacked and maltreated the inhabitants, and finally they dared Lincoln to combat with their chief bully, Jack Armstrong. Abe's great strength could not be mistaken by any observer, and rumors of his skill in wrestling had preceded him to New Salem. He took up the gauntlet thrown down by Clary's Grove and, although foul tactics were resorted to by the bully's friends, threw with great dexterity his antagonist, who in the end was glad to get free from the powerful grip of Offutt's clerk. After this



incident the "Boys" regarded Lincoln as one of them. They liked his pluck, his strength and his democracy, which counted for more in such a community than the grammar and Euclid which he was soon to learn in the intervals when trade was dull in the store, and a few more encounters of the same kind made him the undisputed champion in this part of Illinois.

Offutt went the way of all such adventurers and his store with him, so that Lincoln was soon ready for new pastures. In the nick of time Black Hawk, the old chief of the Sac Indians, led five hundred mounted warriors across the Mississippi, thus violating a solemn agreement he had lately concluded with the government of the United States. It was now the business of the Federal troops, assisted by some Illinois militiamen, to drive the savages back into the west. Lincoln was ready. He volunteered at the first tattoo, and of the company formed in New Salem and the country roundabout he was elected the captain, the first office he had ever held and that one, he often said afterward, which gave him the most true satisfaction. He was now Captain Lincoln and was off to the war with his band of rustic striplings, none of whom knew any more than he about military tactics or martial discipline. Years afterward this opera bouffe war was as rich a source of comical reminiscence as anything in Mr. Lincoln's life. "Once," he was wont to relate, "when I was crossing a field with a front of twenty men I could not for the life of me remember the proper word of

command for getting my company endwise in order to pass through a gate, so when we came near the opening in the fence I shouted, 'This company is dismissed for two minutes when it will fall in again on the other side of the gate.' "

In camp during these months in the spring and summer of 1832, Lincoln again distinguished himself as a wrestler. As the champion of northern Illinois he was challenged by the champion of southern Illinois, who at the meeting was soon lifted off his feet and thrown flat upon his back upon the turf. The speech in Congress many years later when he emptied the vials of his quaint satire upon the followers of General Cass, who were endeavoring to make that man a military hero on his Black Hawk War record, was the event of that Congressional session. Those who heard the speech never forgot it.<sup>1</sup> Lincoln, an inconspicuous new member, was seated in the last row near a door. He chose a fitting moment, and gaining the floor strode up the aisle toward the speaker's chair, his gigantic and angular frame the centre of interest, as with one hand he flapped his rusty coat-tails and with the other drove his points home into the writhing Democrats. While the House roared at his perorations he returned to consult his notes, sip a glass of water and again sally out to the charge in the same manner. He was himself an Indian war veteran, he said, who had fought and bled when Black Hawk raised his war-whoop in Illinois. If he

<sup>1</sup>Rice's "Reminiscences of Lincoln," p. 220.

had not bent his sword like General Cass, he had bent his musket. If Cass picked whortleberries he had eaten wild onions. The only blood either of them had seen in that campaign could be ascribed to the assaults made upon them by the mosquitoes.

But for a time, though he had forgotten the enjoyment of the sensation, Lincoln was something of a hero himself. When his company's term had expired its captain reenlisted as a private. He was mustered out at length in Wisconsin, and was left to make his way home with some companions on foot and by canoe. Sore with travel and half starved, the warriors reentered New Salem only ten days before the August elections for the legislature. Before volunteering for the war he had announced in a printed hand-bill that he was a candidate for legislative honors, and would appreciate it if his fellow citizens of Sangamon County would rally to his support. His return so late in the campaign left him little time for electioneering, and there were in that day no war "extras" to describe his glorious charges on the Indians during his absence. He was running as a Whig, an out and out Clay man who favored a national bank, a protective tariff and internal improvements in a state servilely devoted to Andrew Jackson. His political associations were of his own choosing, for his antecedents bound him to no organization. It was a struggle of almost thirty years to loose Illinois from its attachments to a party which freely gave to Stephen A. Douglas and its other leaders the rewards that

Lincoln in a penniless youth had relinquished his claim to, when he fell in behind Henry Clay.

The most exciting event that ever occurred in the brief life of New Salem was the arrival there early in 1832, before Lincoln had enlisted for the Indian campaign, of "the splendid upper cabin steamer *Talisman*" from Cincinnati. She came out the Ohio, and up the Illinois and the Sangamon until she could go no farther for the branches overhanging the stream. Lincoln and a body of skilful woodsmen went out with axes to cut a way for the boat, and it finally ascended the little river to the manifest delight of the citizens. Since the exploit of the *Talisman* had proven that the Sangamon was a navigable stream, every legislative candidate who laid claim to popular support must be an advocate of liberal appropriations to improve the channel by taking out the snags, so that New Salem might have direct steamship communication at once with Yokohama, Hongkong and Liverpool.

Lincoln was the man for this campaign. Although but a few days remained, he entered the contest with a will, and made several speeches in favor of internal improvements. "I am young," he said in his circular to the people, "and unknown to many of you. I was born and have ever remained in the most humble walks of life. I have no wealthy or powerful relations or friends to recommend me. My case is thrown exclusively upon the independent voters of the county; and if elected they will have conferred a favor upon me

for which I shall be unremitting in my labors to compensate. But if the good people in their wisdom shall see fit to keep me in the background, I have been too familiar with disappointment to be very much chagrined."

This language in a man of twenty-three, "too familiar with disappointment to be very much chagrined," is the index to a mind that was always characterized by moody introspection, approaching fatalism. It was the element of character which before he had a gray hair in his head caused him to be generally known as "Old Abe." The disappointment came, despite the war record he had opportunely gained. Sangamon County, then sparsely settled and undivided, had an area of several thousand square miles, and the liveliest campaigner could not have reached all its scattered hustings in so brief a period. It was the only time in his life Lincoln was defeated for elective office. A very gratifying evidence of the affection in which he was held at home was found in the fact that only three votes out of nearly three hundred were cast against him in his own precinct of New Salem.

Lincoln was now again at the mercy of the elements. No more soldiering and no more electioneering offered at the moment, and his great frame must be sustained constantly. He had definitely cut loose from his father's poor shelter, and was now swinging in the current of the world. He canvassed the whole situation. He might become a black-

smith. He might again become a farm-hand, an employment for which he had unconcealed distaste and little competency except unusual strength. The way opening he returned to merchandising in a "grocery," the name for a store in which liquors, tobacco, sugar, coffee, iron tools and muslins are all together kept on sale to satisfy the varied demands of a frontier population. The store had been owned and managed by the Herndons, relations of his future law partner in Springfield. In the transfer, one of the partners had sold his interest in the undertaking to an idle fellow named Berry, while Lincoln took the other half of the business, payment being made by promissory notes. Thus was established the firm of Berry and Lincoln which a little later purchased the stock of a rival merchant, thus obtaining undisputed control of the trade in the village. Berry early displayed a ruinous fondness for strong drink and Lincoln with head propped upon a roll of calico prints at full length on the counter was given to the perusal of Blackstone and Chitty. In summer when the days were warm he could be seen outside the store door on his back under an oak-tree, a book in hand. Sitting on his shoulder-blades, throughout his life a favorite attitude, he shifted his position with the sun by the use of his long legs which rested on the trunk of the oak, those legs of which it was said that he could twice wrap one about the other, but whose amplitude he never regretted since it was his belief that the limbs of every man should be long

enough to reach from his body to the ground. Thus it was that the business "winked out," in the expressive phrase of the time and Lincoln was left with a debt so hopelessly stupendous in the view of his friends that they christened it "the national debt." While he was a Congressman in Washington in 1848 his partner, Herndon, was still receiving remittances to wipe out the last traces of this lingering incumbrance. He knew no weariness until he had paid the last cent due on this old paper, but it long stood as a debt of honor, which the holders could not have rated in their own minds at its face worth.

Lincoln, always with nothing to his name, was now a good deal less than a cipher in finance. He worked in the neighborhood as a plowman, a harvest-hand and a wood-cutter for his clothing and his board. In the spring of 1833 he had received the appointment as postmaster at New Salem. The mails arrived once a week, his fees were insignificant and he literally kept the post-office in his hat. As he went to work at some neighboring farm he carried the letters with him and often delivered them to their owners as he met them on the way. He continued to hold this office for about three years when New Salem, dwindling in population, ceased to be a post station.

Lincoln, in many respects as shifting and migratory as his father, always looking about him for larger opportunities and better situations now took up the study of surveying. The county surveyor

needed an assistant in the work of plotting out farms for the settlers now flocking into Illinois and Lincoln, already fond of mathematics, applied himself assiduously for a time until he had mastered the art. He plotted quarter sections, located roads and by travel widened his acquaintance in the county. Always a popular figure wherever he went he gathered to him new friends, still wrestling from time to time and freely engaging in rough tests of strength much in vogue in the rustic western settlements. Once he accomplished a prodigious feat in carrying saw logs heavy enough for four men. With harness on his hips he raised a box containing a half ton of stones and on another occasion on a wager lifted a barrel of whiskey and drank from the bung. He could throw a cannon ball or maul farther than any of his competitors. The story telling propensity which had been strong in his father was being developed at every opportunity. He was speaking in eloquent tropes from stumps and store-boxes for a deeper and wider Sangamon. And he was making himself stronger and stronger with the people who again in August, 1834, would choose representatives in the legislature. Democrats as well as Whigs could enjoy the good fellowship of this man of the people who now as always was a truer democrat than that chief of democrats, "Old Hickory," had ever been.

Lincoln asked the advice of Major John T. Stuart, his old comrade-at-arms in the Black Hawk War from whom he borrowed cumbersome leather back



law books. The volumes tied in a bundle, dangling from the end of a staff thrown over his shoulder, as he strode to and from Springfield, the county seat,—we have a picture which illustrates his early interest in the law. Stuart who had been elected when Lincoln fell by the way in 1832 advised his young friend to make the canvass with the result that the latter ran ahead of the whole ticket, leading Stuart's poll by more than 200 votes.

The capital of Illinois, at the time a state of about 250,000 people, was located at Vandalia and to that place Lincoln repaired with his delegation to make the laws for his fellow citizens. Many of the legislators walked to town while others came on horseback and in buggies. Clad in blue jeans with no metropolitan polish, his conspicuous figure, instinct with its homely wit, was transferred from New Salem to what was then the most fashionable centre of civilization on the "Sucker" frontier. It might not seem very elegant as reckoned by our present standards for such things, but thither came legislators, lobbyists and office seekers, just as they come to capitals to-day; among the latter class Stephen A. Douglas, who Lincoln said was "the least man" he had ever seen. Lincoln was undoubtedly one of the largest Douglas had ever beheld, and was soon to become celebrated as a member of that picturesque group called the "Long Nine." In this legislative session the state was redistricted, and to the county of Sangamon, two senators and seven representatives were assigned.

The people of the county at the next election, in 1836, returned as their representatives at Vandalia nine men, Lincoln among them, each one of whom was more than six feet in height, in corporeal proportions as imposing a body of statesmen as any capital may ever hope to receive out of the lap of plenty from which legislatures are derived.

Lincoln again made a display of his popularity by coming out at the head of the poll, and as the people's servant, which each member claimed to be, was the leading figure in his delegation. The Whigs had assumed control of the county to hold it so long as the party continued to be a force in politics, and Abraham Lincoln was their chief. His responsible duties seem not to have been performed with the wisdom which marked his public action in subsequent years, and it were well if this period could be blotted from a biographical record which in most respects so signally adorns the history of America, the history indeed of the entire Anglo-Saxon race. The movement to navigate the Sangamon was but one cog in a wheel that had now begun to move until it caught the whole state, and in truth many other states in the vortex of its revolutions. Not only was each small stream to be straightened and dredged, but a great canal to connect Lake Michigan and the Mississippi watershed and other artificial waterways were projected together with railroads to crisscross the prairies in every imaginable direction. Places without inhabitants grew to size almost instantaneously. The

magic gourd was outdone in Chicago, whose first impetus was received in this period of hope and prosperous illusion. Bonds were voted without regard to ways and means for paying the interest or the principal of the debt, and gangs of men were actually set to work upon these vast ill-considered undertakings before the realization of their utter lunacy was arrived at by the legislators who made the laws, or the people who in the final resort were to bear the charges for so much artificial prosperity. No one man was blamable over and above the others for this season of political error and wrong, but Lincoln bore his part with enthusiasm.

The "Sangamon Chief" also labored at this session to secure the removal of the state capital from Vandalia to Springfield, his own county seat, and by skilful manœuvring and a balancing of rival interests and claims gained the victory. Returning home with his eight strapping confederates, the heroes of the countryside, with bells ringing, "fire balls" tossed into the air at night, candles at the windows in the villages and banquets at which toasts were drunk to

"Abraham Lincoln: He has fulfilled the expectations of his friends and disappointed the hopes of his enemies,"

"A. Lincoln: One of Nature's noblemen," he was welcomed back to his seat in the corner store at New Salem to describe the adventures of the winter to the "Boys" of Clary's Grove.

But Lincoln was now passing out of the lives of

his old associates. The little river town was too narrow a stage. It was "winking out" like the grocery store, its streets to be ploughed up for corn-fields. Its most distinguished citizen was induced to settle at the county seat and there, having in the meantime acquired by private reading a sufficient mastery of the law to practice at a bar then requiring no great degree of erudition, was admitted to partnership with Major John T. Stuart, with whom he had served in the Spy Battalion against the Indians. Stuart manifested a great deal of interest in the young man in the legislature, but he was already deeply absorbed in politics. Defeated for Congress in 1836 he was more successful two years later, being elected over so adroit an opponent as the young and ambitious Stephen A. Douglas. Little time remained therefore for his practice, and Lincoln was not to enjoy the inestimable advantages of careful tutorship or even of good example from his senior in the law office.

Upon his removal to Springfield he was by no means unknown, for a legislator who had been the principal influence to make that place the capital of the state, had not been allowed to pass without appreciative notice. But the town then contained less than 1,500 white inhabitants, and civilization was at no great height. Lawyers received their clients in dingy offices which were fitted up over small shops. Merchants lived in their stores and with one of these Lincoln early concluded an arrangement for sleeping quarters. Joshua F. Speed,

like Major Stuart's young law partner, was a Kentuckian, the son of a rich farmer in the Blue Grass land. He had lately settled in Springfield to open a miscellaneous store. Lincoln entering it one day to purchase some bedding and furniture for his lodgings had in a little while selected so many articles—about thirty dollars' worth—that he was unable to pay the bill and frankly owning in the hopeless mood that often seized him that he probably never could discharge the debt, if credit were allowed, Speed upon learning who his customer was invited him to share a bedroom in the store. Lincoln liked the suggestion, accepted the invitation and thus a beginning was made to a friendship which was of lasting value to the two men.

Lincoln was now a citizen of the town which continued to be his home until he left it to go upon his grand national mission to Washington only to return a martyred corse mourned by the whole civilized world. He had, after many essays and failures in other fields, given his allegiance unquestioningly to law and politics, the avenues to his final success. Springfield to which he had come with his all comprehended in a pair of saddle-bags on a borrowed horse, was as the capital of Illinois the meeting-ground for two streams, one from New England and the other from Kentucky and Virginia. They mingled here to murk the waters of opinion that only the great war could clear, the New England current in curious irony furnishing in Stephen A. Douglas the South's vigorous champion, while Kentucky sent

to this battle-ground of opposite tendencies the man who might have much more easily come in on the Northern tide. Lincoln's social affiliations too were nearly all with the families whom Kentucky had contributed to the life of his adopted state. He was now in the groove that led him upward and onward, though neither he nor any friend could yet foresee his distinguished destiny.

Lincoln and the law were still not on very close terms, for between his continued service in the legislature where efforts must be made to stem the financial panic which legislative and other follies had induced, and love affairs which came to disturb very deeply one of the greatest and most sensitive of hearts, the young barrister made little headway in his profession. Lincoln half realized by this time that he was the worst possible kind of a political economist. The great scheme of internal improvements by which Illinois at command of law was suddenly to be converted into the Empire State of the West ignobly collapsed. Nevertheless the statesmen of the frontier did not confess to their mistakes and only slightly abated their zeal in piling up debts which it was well-nigh necessary, later on, dishonestly to repudiate.

In 1838 Lincoln was reelected to the legislature and being generally recognized as the leader of the Whig minority was nominated for speaker. He came within one vote of an election, gave his influence ungrudgingly in favor of more internal improvements, though the markets were glutted with

Illinois bonds, jumped with some party friends from the windows of the church in which the sessions were being held in order to break a quorum and obstruct the regular course of legislation, always strengthening himself in the good esteem of the people with whom rough and ready statesmanship was the only sort fully understood and appreciated. Lincoln was again elected to the legislature in 1840 in the hard cider, log cabin and 'coon campaign conducted by the Whigs against Martin Van Buren. In this exciting contest, of which a witness has said that it can "never have a parallel should the country have an existence for a thousand years,"<sup>1</sup> Lincoln was a presidential elector, stumping the state with industry. While Illinois could not be won away from the Democrats for "Tippecanoe and Tyler too," he was no small factor in solidifying the Whig minority. This was Lincoln's last campaign for the legislature. He was again his party's candidate for the speakership, but was again defeated and with the ending of his fourth consecutive term in the state's lawmaking body, he entered upon another period of his life.

<sup>1</sup> E. B. Washburne in "Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln," p. 7.

## CHAPTER II

### BENEDICK AND LAWYER

WHEN Lincoln lived at New Salem he was a boarder, for a time at least, at a log tavern whose sides were covered with rough clapboards, kept by James Rutledge, the host like his guest being an immigrant from Kentucky, although of South Carolina origins. The tavern-keeper had nine children, one of whom Anne, a beautiful young girl, was a great favorite in the neighborhood. Her rosy cheeks made havoc with Lincoln's affections and he was well filled with his passion about the time he was first chosen to represent Sangamon County in the state legislature. She, taken sick, died in August, 1835, and this event, it is freely declared, though not without qualification by some biographers who have found that too much emphasis is placed upon the touching romance, went far to darken all his future life. Alone in her presence for a time before her death he was soon plunged in dangerous abstraction. He said later in reflecting upon his moods at this period that he did not trust himself to carry a pocket-knife. For several weeks he was under the surveillance of a friend, who lived a mile outside the village, until he could recover



his equilibrium, but he was reserved for some further misadventures of the heart.

His next affair seems to have involved a woman of rather portly appearance and no longer very young when she crossed his pathway, Mary Owens by name, although when fame came to Lincoln there were several rumors of women in the West who had rejected his suit, just as there were men in Kentucky to say that they had fished him out of the stream in his boyhood with a sycamore branch. Mary Owens was also a Kentuckian, and while visiting her sister in Illinois came to fill, or at least to make less vacant the void in Lincoln's heart. A lover who lacked any suggestion of skill in presenting his suit, he seems to have desired marriage without feeling at all certain about the wisdom of the step. A *fainéant* in his loves who experienced the force of the feeling without being very willing to take the natural consequences in the attempt to make any other happy by sharing his lot in life, he plainly wrote his "Friend Mary," that although he would abide by his decision to marry her if she wished, it was his honest opinion that she had "better not do it." It is not very surprising, therefore, that this romance of 1837 came to an unhappy end; Miss Owens renouncing her lover, it was said, because of his poverty and personal awkwardness, but as likely as not because of his singularly undiplomatic way of conducting the negotiations. In a little while he was able to fling off the burden of this disappointment and his sub-

sequent course illustrates the truth of a poet's words :—

“ Naught of earth's so dead as a dead love—  
'Tis the seasickness of the soul.”

In a letter to the wife of his friend, O. H. Browning, Lincoln wrote in April, 1838, that he was glad to be well out of his “scrape,” since the lady was “over size,” indeed “a fair match for Falstaff,” an “old maid,” who, in conspiracy with her sister, sought to capture him against his personal desires. Now, he added, “I have come to the conclusion never again to think of marrying and for this reason: I can never be satisfied with any one who would be blockhead enough to have *me*.” But as the benedick says, “when I was a bachelor I never thought that I would be a married man,” and Lincoln in a little while was a suitor for the hand of Mary Todd. His loneliness in Springfield was almost past the comprehension of those who are without the power to fathom the depth of feeling of such a character as his, and who may not have known by personal experience the severity of the loss of a first love. His associates were mainly his friend Speed and the men who gathered at night around the stove in Speed's store, to listen to Lincoln's racy anecdotes. He lounged in the offices in the court-house, and occasionally was an invited guest at the home of a fellow lawyer or legislator. From his own folk he was altogether separated, and had permanently raised himself well above their

plane of life. He had little communication with them henceforward except when mortgages were to be lifted and judgment notes paid, for his father continued to move from farm to farm and was still unable to make material progress in the world. So devoid of ambition was the family from which Abraham Lincoln sprang, in all its branches, that not one member appeared among the horde to beg the crumbs of office that fell from the great Republican board during the war time, nor was one of them heard from, so far as evidence appears, except the Hanks who carried the fence rails into the Republican Convention of Illinois. They were not companions for this man whose character grew larger and larger each day that he lived, and who had already long since outdistanced them at every point.

If Lincoln were to attain that success in politics to which his ambition called him loudly and constantly, he would need the social machinery alone to be provided through a home and a wife to preside over it. Mary Todd, born in 1818, therefore nine years Lincoln's junior, was the daughter of Robert S. Todd, a banker of Lexington, Kentucky. She came of an old Virginia family on one side and had direct connection through another line with General Andrew Porter of Pennsylvania, a well known soldier in the American Revolution. She had been brought up amid old Southern comforts and luxuries, and was of aristocratic feelings and tastes. She first visited Springfield in 1837 as the

guest of her sister, the wife of Ninian W. Edwards, one of Lincoln's Whig political friends, and in 1839 came out to make her home with that family. There the acquaintance with Lincoln began and ripened into friendship, affection and love, with occasional lapses in favor of Stephen A. Douglas and other young swains then in vogue at the capital of Illinois. Miss Todd was accomplished in music, dancing, the languages and the arts and refinements of life. Already she loved power and display, being in nearly all essential respects in training and temperament the contrary of the man who now paid her suit.

If it be true, as is sometimes said, that in choosing Lincoln over Douglas she discerned the man who would some time make her mistress of the White House, and thus gratify a lively ambition, she must have had a rare talent in divination. The husband of her choice in 1840 was still far enough removed from that enviable goal, and none would have wagered a very large sum upon such a destiny. He was chosen despite the fact that he had learned scarcely anything of the art by which man can most tactfully gain the lady who is the object of his love. The heart again grew faint. He carried on painful debates in his mind as to whether or not marriage was the best state of life for either party contracting it, emphasized his own poverty and unworthiness, until by self-depreciation he was in so nervous a condition as to cause his friends again to express a fear lest his reason might become wholly

unsettled. Whether we fully credit Herndon's narrative or not when he alleges that the marriage was fixed for January 1, 1841, and that Lincoln failed to present himself for the preacher's seal, while bride and guests were left in the greatest embarrassment, it is certain that the relations were abruptly broken off, and the groom-to-be, distraught almost to insanity in self-searching, disappointment and remorse, was left a pitiful wreck. "I am now the most miserable man living," Lincoln wrote on January 23, 1841, to his partner Major Stuart then in Congress. "If what I feel were equally distributed to the whole human family there would be not one cheerful face on earth. Whether I shall ever be better I cannot tell; I awfully forebode I shall not. To remain as I am is impossible; I must die or be better it seems to me."

Speed assumed an affectionate guardianship. This friend, the son of a wealthy farmer in Kentucky, having disposed of his interests in Springfield, induced Lincoln to accompany him to his home for a season of recuperation. By this warm-hearted family the young lawyer and legislator of Illinois was received with a hospitable kindness which he never forgot, and Speed to complete his capacity for sympathy during this visit himself fell under the lover's spell, being made a victim of a black-eyed Kentucky girl's attractions. At sight of this Lincoln seemed to take heart and leaving his friend to try the matrimonial experiment,

while he looked on to note the effects, his recovery followed hastily. Speed, also in a torment of doubt about the wisdom of his course, needed a friend's consolation which Lincoln gave generously, and the two together pursued their analyses and philosophies with mutual satisfaction, until the Kentuckian steeled himself for the deed and settled with his wife in his native state to lead a planter's life.

Lincoln wished to know of his friend whether the actual experience justified earlier expectations. "I want to ask you a close question," he wrote to Speed, "are you now in feeling, as well as in judgment, glad you are married as you are? From anybody but me this would be an impudent question, not to be tolerated; but I know you will pardon it in me. Please answer it quickly, as I am impatient to know." Speed declaring that he was "far happier" than he had ever expected to be, Lincoln, the reluctant lover still only half repentant, writes: "Since the fatal 1st of January, 1841, it seems to me I should have been entirely happy, but for the never absent idea that there is one still unhappy whom I have contributed to make so. That still kills my soul. I cannot but reproach myself for even wishing myself to be happy while she is otherwise." Many have dwelt upon this incident in Lincoln's life irreverently, so unusual was his conduct of his love affairs, but as Nicolay and Hay, the most exhaustive of his many biographers have observed, his attitude is easily

explicable when his character is understood. "There are few men," as they say truly, "that have had his stern and tyrannous sense of duty, his womanly tenderness of heart, his wakeful and inflexible conscience which was so easy toward others and so merciless toward himself." If there be anything in the known world that will heal a breach created by cowardice on the wedding morning it must be comprehended under the name of love and doubtless this explains why a Springfield dame sometime late in 1842 was able to bring Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd together and make the embers glow again.

In August the *Sangomo Journal* published some letters from the "Lost Townships" in the frontier dialect attacking, in a satirical way, the conduct of the state government in which an irritable young Irishman, James Shields, then serving a term as Auditor was involved. The state was in the throes of paying the monumental debt which Lincoln and his fellow members of the legislature had contracted for internal improvements. Shields conceived that his honor had been wounded in these communications to the county paper and appealed to the editor for the name of the writer who had signed him or herself, "Rebecca." It seems that Lincoln had written at least one of the letters and in a spirit of mischievous fun Mary Todd, with whom there had now been a reconciliation, aided by a young lady friend, had also contributed to the series of printed interchanges, made the more

entertaining to every one as soon as Shields' vanity had been visibly pricked. The editor, ignorant as to the course he should pursue, consulted Lincoln who said that he would publicly stand for his own as well as for the ladies' utterances concerning the Auditor of the state, and in a twinkling Shields challenged him to a duel.

Shields led what may rightly be regarded as one of the most peculiar and striking political careers ever enjoyed by any one in America. An alien by birth he almost constantly occupied lucrative and honorable political posts. From the Auditor's office he was to be promoted to the Illinois Supreme bench. In a little while he was appointed Commissioner of the General Land Office, from which place in the civil service, without a day's experience in battle, he was made a Brigadier General in the Mexican War. The object of general ridicule, which however was no protection from a shot through the lungs, he came home with a fresh wound to receive his reward, an election as Douglas's colleague in the United States Senate. Removing to Minnesota he became a United States senator from that state, was again appointed a Brigadier in the Civil War, being again wounded in a battle with Stonewall Jackson—and finally as an old man he was for a third time sent to the United States Senate—on this occasion from Missouri, of which state he was at the moment a resident.

Of such redoubtable stuff was the man who now



sought Lincoln's gore, and the latter very promptly, seeming to fear the unfavorable opinion which his refusal to fight would invite, chose as weapons "cavalry broadswords of the largest size." If he had no intention of injuring his adversary he was no less determined not to be hurt himself, and he afterward explained that he had chosen this weapon because he knew that his arm was longer than Shields'. There were buggies and canoes, an island in the river, seconds, surgeons and an exchange of details about the code, but just before the meeting took place two peacemakers appeared and persuaded Lincoln to apologize for his offensive words in the newspaper, and Shields to withdraw his challenge. Lincoln was wont to declare afterward that he was more ashamed of his part in this duel than anything he had ever done in his life, unless it be his escapade in jumping from the church window. An army officer who had called at the White House during the war, asked Lincoln if he had one time really accepted a challenge and gone forth to the dueling-ground. "I don't deny it," the President is said to have replied, "but if you desire my friendship you will never mention the circumstance again."

How deeply Lincoln's willingness to represent them with broadswords may have impressed the ladies of the Springfield of 1842, we are able only to guess. In any case, he was married to Miss Todd, on November 4, 1842, at the home of her sister, in the presence of only a very few friends,

though still not a very ardent believer in matrimony, if we credit the testimony of the boy who after he had grown up declared that he had met Lincoln on the day of his wedding. Boylike, he inquired, "Where are you going dressed up so fine?" "To hell, I suppose," responded the melancholy bridegroom, a story if it be not entirely true, sufficiently well indicates Lincoln's state of mind in reference to the marriage question whenever it came into his life.

Lincoln was now thirty-three years old. He took his bride to the Globe Tavern, where they continued to reside until he built the frame cottage where the convention committee found him when it came down from Chicago to notify him of his nomination for the presidency. Four sons were the issue of this marriage: Robert Todd, who was in Harvard College while his father was President, joined Grant's staff late in the war, was Garfield's Secretary of War, and later the United States' Minister to England, born in 1843; Edward Baker, born in 1846, who died when about four years old; William Wallace, born in 1850, dying at the White House, to make deeper the careworn furrows in his father's face, and Thomas, or "Tad," born in 1853, the President's inseparable companion in Washington, who survived his father a few years.

That the marriage was not accounted an entirely happy one, and that his expectations were not exceeded as his friend Speed's had been is very certain. It was an experiment in the blending of op-

posites. Who lacked the most in the balance of compatibility is a question which it would require a modern women's congress to decide. Certainly it cannot be urged for Lincoln that he was a husband to grace fashionable society. It has been said that he hated clothing. He had a habit of taking off his boots in his home or at his office "to allow his feet to breathe," as he said, and sometimes went to his own door in his shirt sleeves to receive Mrs. Lincoln's lady friends. After he was nominated for the presidency, he visited Chicago, accompanied by his wife. A lady of prominence socially called upon Mrs. Lincoln in her hotel to keep an appointment for a promenade. Lincoln, receiving the caller, apologized for his wife's tardiness, explaining that she would be down "as soon as she got all her trotting harness on." The witnesses to Lincoln's apparent contempt for polite social usages are as numerous as those who knew him well enough to formulate an estimate of his character, and the question may be submitted to the women of this generation whether in such a place their satisfaction would have been more complete than Mary Todd's. That Lincoln was a great sensitive organization of nerves, tenderesses and affections, none can dispute, and yet it is doubtful if he could be regarded as a perfect husband. Mrs. Lincoln's dispositional frailties and eccentricities, in some respects pronounced, called forth from him no words of blame, and that he did not fully meet the requirements of a gentleman, caused him many

days and weeks of unhappiness each year that he lived, and contributed an indefinite sum, if the truth were known, to the mellowing of his nature and the development of that large, sympathetic and charitable interpretation of human motives, which was so useful a factor in enabling him to save the Union and emancipate the slave.

Lincoln's knowledge of the law was still imperfect. His reading was done under his own direction, and Major Stuart, whose partner he had been since his arrival in Springfield, was either absent as a Congressman in Washington, or else was laying his plans to get into Congress, during the entire time the two men were associated in business. Lincoln himself was interrupted by his engagements as a member of the state legislature, and at other periods his love affairs abstracted him. It was fortunate from the point of view of his advancement in the law that this partnership was dissolved in April, 1841, when he joined Judge Stephen T. Logan, the new firm answering to the alliterative name of Logan and Lincoln. Lincoln had had love affairs with at least three Kentucky women, and one of these had just become his wife. His most intimate friend in Springfield, Speed, was a Kentuckian. His first partner and friend of the Black Hawk War, Stuart, came to Illinois from Kentucky, and now his new partner, Logan, was a native of that state.

The value of association with Judge Logan lay in the fact that he was accounted one of the ablest

lawyers in the West. Unlike some of his colleagues at the bar, he did not regard the law merely as a stepping stone to political preferment. He pursued the practice for its own sake, and brought to bear upon Lincoln influences that were of great worth in inculcating a habit of closer application and deeper study of the principles underlying a case.

Logan was if possible more careless of his dress than Lincoln. He was a small man with a weazen face which was topped by a great shock of frowzy hair. In an unbleached cotton shirt guiltless of cravat he was no prepossessing figure. His voice was shrill and ungrateful to the ear. When Lincoln in Congress wished to describe a speech by Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia, which had moved him deeply, he could think of no better comparison of the speaker in a letter to Mr. Herndon than to say that he was "a little pale-faced consumptive man, with a voice like Logan's." In spite of its rather objectionable quality it was a voice that was listened to attentively, and it pleaded many important cases at the bar. The example of this diligent and hard-working practitioner made Lincoln a better thinker and a more careful reasoner. The association continued until 1845, when Logan formed a new partnership with his son and Lincoln established an office of his own with a young man, William Henry Herndon, with whom, as Lincoln and Herndon, a business relationship continued until political duty called the senior member of the firm to a national scene.

At this time lawyers in Illinois were an itinerant class, and several months in each year were passed in "buggies" or on horseback "riding the circuit." The Eighth Judicial Circuit embraced fourteen counties and was presided over by Judge David Davis. The court sat two or three days or a week at one place, and then judge and advocate moved on to the next county town. Lawyers, witnesses, jurymen and clients swarmed the taverns and whiled away the time when being conveyed over the abominable roads, which were mere trails on the prairies leading from village to village, or when idly resting at night in some country inn, by relating and listening to amusing anecdotes. Lincoln's mind soon became an overflowing storehouse for these stories, some of which he invented, all of which were amplified and adapted to the occasion in passing through his ingenious mind. On these journeys he perfected his knowledge of Euclid, gave some attention at night to astronomy, and committed to memory soliloquies from Shakespeare and sad ballads which harmonized with his constitutional moods. Incidentally there are accounts of his dismounting in the rain to assist fallen nestlings in regaining their beds of grass and down, and once he sadly damaged a suit of clothing to save the life of a pig which had become involved in a quagmire.

It was a season in the history of the law in the West when a practitioner's native wit stood him in better stead than learning gained by laborious consultation of books for rules and precedents. In any

rough and tumble contest of mother genius Lincoln knew no superior. In the employment of anecdote and witty turns of speech he could discomfit almost any adversary and while he was loath to resort to such methods, unless the provocation were severe, he won more than one case by the sheer force of ridicule.

Once it is related that the opposing lawyer in a circuit court, the weather being warm, removed his coat and vest while addressing the jury. At that time in the West shirts were commonly buttoned in front. Only the fashionable in eastern cities had yet come to use the stiff bosoms which necessitated a fastening at the back of the neck. Lincoln seeing that he had his adversary at a disadvantage with rustic jurymen got up and said: "Gentlemen of the jury, having justice on my side, I don't think you will be at all influenced by the gentlemen's pretended knowledge of the law, when you see he does not even know which side of his shirt should be in front," a sally that won him the suit amid hilarious laughter, participated in by the whole court-room.

On another occasion when the lawyer opposing him somewhat bumptiously and vehemently concluded his address to the jury, Lincoln in rebuttal rose and to the visible aggravation of the speaker who had preceded him, told the anecdote of the man who was lost in the prairie in a violent thunder-storm. Although by no means a religious man he fell on his knees and prayed: "Oh, Lord, if it is all the same to you give us a little more light and a

little less noise." He frequently amused judge and jury by his lamentable efforts to pronounce the Latin words and phrases in law books which he made no pretense of being able to understand.

In cases when wrong and injustice had been committed upon the clients whom he represented his notes covering that portion of his argument were brief, "Skin the defendant." He was a master of the fiercest invective when aroused, and if he could once rid a case of its technicalities he and his clients never feared the result. He could sway a jury at will when his heart was in his work. A lawyer who accompanied him on the circuit has related that Lincoln could take greater liberties with the court and still keep within the bounds of orderly procedure than any one else then pleading at the Illinois bar, and this was largely because of his deep sense of justice and his cleverness in the use of apt and humorous anecdote.

In the law, as in every field he ever entered, Lincoln was original and unfettered by the conventions of the world. To a man who entered the office of his firm in Springfield one day to state his case, Lincoln made this memorable reply :

"Yes, we can doubtless gain your case for you ; we can set a whole neighborhood at loggerheads ; we can distress a widowed mother and her six fatherless children and thereby get for you six hundred dollars, to which you seem to have a legal claim but which rightfully belongs, it appears to me, as much to the woman and her children as it



does to you. You must remember that some things legally right are not morally right. We shall not take your case, but will give you a little advice for which we will charge you nothing. You seem to be a sprightly, energetic man ; we would advise you to try your hand at making six hundred dollars in some other way.”<sup>1</sup>

To a client who sought to involve his firm in the real estate business as an adjunct to the law he wrote : “As to the real estate we cannot attend to it. We recommend that you give the charge of it to Mr. Isaac S. Britton, a trustworthy man, and one whom the Lord made on purpose for such business.”

While Lincoln gained something in discipline of mind as the locomotive superseded the buggy, circuits by reason of the rapid settlement of the country were reduced in size, and the lawyer's profession was practiced with less regard for the personal equation and with greater consideration for its scientific principles, it was politics rather than the law to which he felt himself irresistibly drawn. In his campaigns for the legislature, he had won a high reputation as a ready and effective political speaker. At public auctions, county fairs and other popular gathering places, he was a familiar figure in his own district, and he was soon sought after by the Whig managers for larger campaigns. In 1840 he was placed upon the electoral ticket because it was recognized that he would be a useful agent in fol-

<sup>1</sup> Herndon, p. 346.

lowing from town to town the "hard cider" barrels and "'coons," by which it was hoped that the state might be made to bestow its electoral votes upon William Henry Harrison. With his friend Edward D. Baker, one of the cleverest of politicians, who was elected to Congress from a district in Illinois, in which he did not reside, and later to the United States Senate from Oregon, while his home was in California, being killed afterward at the head of his regiment at the battle of Balls Bluff; John J. Hardin, killed in the Mexican War; Major Stuart and other Springfield Whigs, Lincoln traversed the entire state on horseback, speaking nightly to the frontiersmen assembled to shout for "Old Tippecanoe." He again led the electoral ticket in 1844, speaking in all parts of the state for his "beau ideal of a statesman" Henry Clay, who went down to defeat with what was probably the most devoted personal following that ever honored any political leader in America. A man who appealed to their emotions and made his name a magical force for no reason, in the view of the dispassionate historian of to-day, commensurate with the intrinsic importance of his measures, his failure to win the Presidential prize cast gloom over the entire Whig organization.

In the campaign for Clay against Polk, Lincoln's engagements called him to Indiana, where he met many of his boyhood friends of Gentryville and its neighborhood. Already he had been mentioned for Governor, and was eagerly looking forward to

a term in Congress. Aspirants were so plentiful among the Whig lawyers in the Springfield district, that those whose political proportions marked them out for Congress were compelled to take their turns, and each must content himself with a single term. Lincoln's opportunity came in 1846 when, after an exciting summer campaign up and down the district, he was elected by a fine majority over Peter Cartwright, the famous frontier evangelist whom the Democrats had nominated to oppose his canvass. For the reason that the people feared too close a mingling of their religion and their politics, or else because of Lincoln's personal popularity, which had been mightily promoted by his incessant traveling as a lawyer over Judge Davis's circuit, the Whig candidate was elected by a majority of 1,511 votes, nearly six hundred more than Clay's two years before. Of Illinois' delegation of seven Congressmen, Lincoln was the only Whig, and it was not for some time that his party was again to carry the district, for his fearless course in opposing the President's aggressions which were responsible for the Mexican War, resulted in a Democratic triumph when, in 1848, it was Logan's turn to enjoy the honor.

Although in accord in no manner with the war of offense to extend slave territory conducted against Mexico, Lincoln voted money for the prosecution of the military campaigns, once they had been undertaken, and with Alexander Stephens and other Whigs in Congress, formed a club called

the "Young Indians," to promote the nomination and election of Zachary Taylor, who came out of the affair the inevitable candidate for the presidency. Lincoln foreseeing only defeat for Clay, were he renominated, discouraged the movement to bring forward the Kentuckian a second time, and while not a delegate was present at the Whig national convention in Philadelphia. He was confident of Taylor's election. "One unmistakable sign," he wrote to Archibald Williams immediately after the adjournment of the nominating body, "is that all the odds and ends are with us—Barnburners, Native Americans, Tyler men, disappointed office-seeking Locofocos and the Lord knows what."<sup>1</sup> He urged his partner Herndon to organize a club of young men in Springfield, naming those whom he thought could best direct it in the hope of capturing Illinois for "Old Zach." He wished every one to take the part he could play best—"some speak, some sing and all 'holler.'"<sup>2</sup>

After Congress adjourned in August, 1848, Lincoln spoke in many states for "Old Rough." He went first to New York and then visited New England, returning to Illinois in the autumn where he was actively engaged upon the stump until the end of the campaign. While the western course of civilization had effected an important social revolution in Illinois, campaigning was still very largely a muscular enterprise. It required the ability to

<sup>1</sup> Lincoln, "Speeches," Vol. I, p. 122.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 132.

maintain order in your audiences, to reply off-hand to interjected remarks by rowdies bent upon a disturbance of the peace, to use freely a body of rude anecdote, of which probably no man ever had a more abundant store than Abraham Lincoln. In one of his legislative campaigns he is said to have descended from the platform in the midst of his speech to quell an incipient riot, throwing a bully twelve feet on the turf. Indeed the employment of his long sinewy frame in the physical argument which inevitably accompanied the intellectual on the rude hustings of early Illinois, was a very common thing, and this factor was no small agency at such a time in impressing his opinions upon the popular body. In the court-room in Springfield during one exciting campaign Baker might have come to serious harm had it not been for his friend Lincoln's timely appearance on the scene. On the second floor of the building in which the meeting was held, Stuart and Lincoln had their law office, and Lincoln, as he was wont to do on such occasions, listened at a trap-door that opened directly above the platform. Baker, warming up to his subject, indulged in a severe arraignment of the Democratic party, whereupon the crowd rose from its feet to pull him from the speaker's stand. At the ripe moment Lincoln's legs dangled from the ceiling and he fell upon the platform in the midst of confusion to raise his voice in defense of the right of free speech, a principle, however, for which the mob cared vastly less than Lincoln's

threatening mien, and the great stone water pitcher which he seized from the table and held in his hand for use against the first invader of the rostrum. The orator with such support was allowed to proceed with his speech.

Lincoln from his youth was obstreperous game for those who considered him a mark for ridicule. No man ever met him fairly on open ground who was not made to repent of his temerity in initiating the attack. In one campaign a Democrat named Taylor, inconsistently dressed as a dandy from tip to toe, was much given to denunciation of the lordly ways of the Whig party. One day he rashly accused Lincoln of aristocratic sympathies and connections with unexpected results. The latter slipped up to the speaker, mischievously pulled open his vest and exhibited his ruffled shirt front studded with jewelry, addressing some remarks to the crowd at the same time which set it into laughter. The demagogue had been revealed and the uncouth Lincoln in his ill-fitting garments was now able to stand beside the dumbfounded and angry Taylor, appealing to the people to decide which of them was the truer democrat.

It was perhaps Lincoln's first appearance in Springfield, and his speech which Speed who had just come up from Kentucky said was as fine as anything he had heard from the famous orators of that state. Lincoln made so deep an impression indeed that a well-known lawyer, George Forquer, who had earlier been a Whig but who upon chang-

ing his politics was appointed Register of the Land Office, noted in all that neighborhood as the only man who had fitted his house with a newly-invented rod to protect it from lightning, rose to take the wind out of the young man's sails. Lincoln standing with arms folded listened until Forquer was done when speaking deliberately he said: "The gentleman commenced his speech by saying that this young man will have to be taken down and he was sorry that the task devolved upon him. I am not so young in years as I am in the tricks and trades of a politician but, live long or die young, I would rather die now than like the gentleman change my politics and simultaneously with the change receive an office worth \$3,000 a year and then have to erect a lightning-rod over my house to protect a guilty conscience from an offended God." So successful was this rejoinder that Lincoln was carried from the platform on the shoulders of his friends.

Lincoln, known as "Honest Abe" from the time he had been a storekeeper in New Salem, strengthened his claim to this title by the well-known moderation of his charges as a lawyer. When his sympathies were appealed to and he knew that his clients could not well afford the expense of the litigation which circumstances had forced upon them, his fees were very light. So greatly did he lean to the side of mercy in his business dealings at the bar that his fellow lawyers not unfrequently took him to task for a practice which they said demoral-

ized the entire profession. He defended without charge the son of his old friend Jack Armstrong, the wrestler of Clary's Grove, held for homicide and cleared the boy by distributing almanacs to the jurymen to upset the testimony of a witness who had sworn that he had seen the deed committed in the glare of a full moon. The almanac showed clearly that the murder had been done in the dark of the moon.

He performed a similar service quite gratuitously for Mr. Linder whose son was accused of the same crime, and who had sought Lincoln's assistance in trying the case in a district in which he was regarded as a "tower of strength." Lincoln replied that no engagement would be allowed to interfere with his care of the case and to the offer of a fee replied that he knew of no act of his in his previous life which would justify the supposition that he would "take money from a friend for assisting in the defense of a child."

Long "Honest Abe," he now came to be known as "Old Abe." When little more than thirty, people on the street as he passed them remarked to each other, "There goes Old Abe," and, "There goes old Mr. Lincoln." Lincoln's tall frame wrapped in a shawl, a market-basket on one arm and a little boy holding fast to the other in an effort to keep up with him was a familiar sight in Springfield as he dreamily strided of a winter's morning through the streets. He still achieved no great success in the accumulation of a fortune.



Just prior to his marriage to Miss Todd he wrote to his friend Speed : "I am so poor and make so little headway in the world that I drop back in a month of idleness as much as I gain in a year's sowing."

If we believe his partner, Herndon, Lincoln never had "money sense." He knew little of finance for the state and nation, as is evidenced for example by his record in the legislature of Illinois. He had little genius in directing his own household and his office was in a proverbial state of disorder. For his services in the Black Hawk War he had secured a land warrant which he entered on a tract in Iowa, opposite the present city of Omaha. He had the frame cottage in Springfield in which he resided until his departure for the White House, but the acquisitive quality was not his. Though in youth a surveyor like Washington, he unlike Washington did not become a landowner, viewing with a planter's pride the extension of his acres. He had none of the avidity of that Western farmer of whom he sometimes told a story : "I am not greedy about land," said the man. "I only want what jines mine." His friends and partners were purchasing quarter sections and town lots which increased in value magically, while he, a man of fifty, for twenty-five years a leading politician of Illinois and one of her prominent barristers, still prospered very moderately.

His ambitions were not great. In New York City, in 1860, when he came east to deliver his

famous address at the Cooper Institute he unexpectedly met an old friend from Illinois who asked him how he had fared in the world. "Oh, very well," Lincoln is said to have replied. "I have the cottage at Springfield and about \$8,000 in money. If they make me Vice President with Seward, as some say they will, I hope I shall be able to increase it to \$20,000 and that is as much as any man ought to want." This in truth was a complete inventory of Lincoln's worldly possessions when he exchanged the capital of Illinois for the capital of the United States as the theatre of his life. To riches he did not aspire and tastes which are the spur to thrift were not present to impel him to put forth great effort for their satisfaction.

When Mr. Lincoln's term in Congress had ended and he had assisted by means of many good speeches in elevating "Old Zach" to the Presidency, the tempter came to suggest a reward for his services. Lincoln was wont to speak of office-seekers when he came to the White House as men who sought to "live without work." Whether this was his view of the subject in 1849 or not we are without means of knowing very accurately. The life of Washington, now that he had had a taste of it, had its allurements, especially for Mrs. Lincoln, who for a part of the time with her children was his companion at the national capital. Some of his friends in Illinois, scarcely without his approval, pleaded his cause as an applicant for the commissionership of the General Land Office, a mere bureau desk in the

Interior Department, but at this period as large a plum as usually fell into the lap of the West. He was unfortunate enough to have taken up a position as sponsor for another applicant, but the latter's claims were adjusted to general satisfaction and Lincoln might have become a bureaucrat, his genius harried with clerkly duties and his future endangered as the nation's man of the hour in 1860, the figure around whom the North and West could rally in the nation's critical years, but that Daniel Webster cast the weight of his influence on the side of Justin Butterfield whom Lincoln called "an old drone,"<sup>1</sup> a lawyer of Chicago who had performed no valuable service for the party. When the Land Office was taken out of his reach a consolation prize was offered him in the shape of the secretaryship or governorship of Oregon where it was argued he might find a wide field for the gratification of his political ambitions, since he would almost certainly be returned in a little while as one of the new state's senators. Mrs. Lincoln vetoed the suggestion, as she did another, which seems to have been seriously debated, that he should settle in Chicago as a domain of greater future promise in the practice of the law. In Springfield Lincoln was to remain until the Republic called him to his destined place.

<sup>1</sup> "Speeches," Vol. I, p. 157.

## CHAPTER III

### HIS ENTRY INTO THE ANTI-SLAVERY CONFLICT

It is often said that Lincoln's aversion to slavery was indigenous to his nature, but so much panegyric has been indulged in on this point in view of what later occurred in the general emancipation of the negroes, a deal of it most obviously gratuitous, that some care must be exercised by the historian who would avoid the pitfalls which are prepared for him at every stage of the way. In New Orleans, which he had visited on the flatboat in 1831, Lincoln saw slaves in the market-place for the first time in his life. Then and there, his companion John Hanks has said, human bondage ran its iron into him and his antagonism to the system was unremitting until he reached the position when he could strike the shackles from every slave on American soil. He had written to Speed's sister after his return by steamboat from his visit to Kentucky, remarking upon a sight which during the journey had impressed him most unhappily. On board were twelve negroes being taken by a planter, who had just purchased them, to his home in the south. "They were chained six and six together," Lincoln writes. "A small iron clevis was around the left wrist of each and this fastened to the main chain by a shorter one at a

convenient distance from the others so that the negroes were strung together precisely like so many fish upon a trot-line. In this condition they were being separated forever from the scenes of their childhood, their friends, their fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters and many of them from their wives and children, and going into perpetual slavery where the lash of the master is proverbially more ruthless and unrelenting than any other where." Fourteen years later Lincoln wrote to Speed alluding to this spectacle still pictured upon his mind: "That sight was a continued torment to me and I see something like it every time I touch the Ohio or any other slave border. It is not fair for you to assume," he adds, "that I have no interest in a thing which has and continually exercises the power of making me miserable."

Nevertheless Lincoln was far from giving himself great concern about this thing which caused him misery and torment. There were many men who by word and pen and ballot openly espoused the cause of the slave and sought by every available method according to the measure of their gifts to arouse the nation to a sense of the magnitude of the wrong. Conscientious and fearless people were defying the laws of their country in helping fugitives northward on the way to freedom and the din of mighty struggle fell on many ears while Lincoln's energies were being expended in an effort to prolong the useless days of the Whig party. He had never had an idea upon the subject of

slavery he declared which was not derived from Henry Clay. But it is to be hoped, and his friends know, that while the sounding utterances of "Harry of the West," were insincere, his were sincere; while Clay condemned slavery though he continued to own slaves, Lincoln owned no human property and could not have done so without an overturning of the entire fabric of his morality.

In 1837, Lincoln with Dan Stone, another of the "Long Nine" in the Illinois legislature, put himself on record for the first time in a public way on the great slavery question. These two men joined in a protest against resolutions which had been passed by their fellow assemblymen in condemnation of the propagation of Abolition doctrines in Illinois. The protest, upon a candid reading to-day, little reflects the aroused conscience of its authors. It declares that the efforts of the Abolitionists tend rather to increase than to abate the evils of slavery, that Congress lacks the power to interfere with the institution in the states and that while it might do so in the District of Columbia this step should be taken only at the request of the people of the District.

In Congress, while he opposed the Mexican War as unnecessary and unconstitutional and distinguished himself in rather free denunciations of the President, by whom it was provoked, the occasion was not embraced for a statement of his principles upon the slavery question. It is an ungrateful task, as many have learned to their peculiar sorrow in

democracies, to oppose the progress of any movement having for its object the extension of the national domain. Lincoln, still given to the florid rhetoric so popular with western audiences, accused Polk of an attempt to escape scrutiny for his acts "by fixing the public gaze upon the exceeding brightness of military glory, that attractive rainbow that rises in showers of blood, that serpent's eye that charms but to destroy," and was hard pressed to justify his course to his constituents when the mails carried them an account of his unusual behavior as their representative. But the important part which the Mexican War, by the annexation of territory, was to play in the development of the great crisis between the sections was not yet foreseen, and Lincoln's opposition to that ungodly conflict was governed less by his convictions upon slavery than by sentiments of a more general nature. He spent his two years in Congress with no other reward from the Abolitionists for his services on the slavery question than their outspoken maledictions. So small a value did they set upon anything which he had done up to that time to make less heinous the evil which they were combatting day and night with all their hearts and souls, if unwisely at any rate always with admirable honesty, that when Lincoln came forward as the Republican candidate for the presidency Wendell Phillips had no better name for him than "that slave hound of Illinois." Such a title Phillips believed might properly be bestowed upon the Re-

publican nominee because of his course while in Congress on the subject of slavery in the District of Columbia. To see men offer slaves for sale on the capitol steps and traffic in human bodies within the shadow of the great building in which the delegates of the American nation met was a terrible offense to the Abolitionists and they neglected no opportunity to urge upon Congress the prohibition of the trade.

It was a fact, as Lincoln observed in 1854, that for fifty years there had been in view from the windows of the capitol "a sort of negro livery-stable, where droves of negroes were collected, temporarily kept and finally taken to Southern markets precisely like droves of horses." The right of the Federal government to enter a state and interfere with a local institution might not be admissible until the constitution of the United States should be amended in that sense, but the right to regulate a municipal affair in the District of Columbia was unqualified and it was the duty of Congress to drive this iniquity out of national territory without more delay.

The measure for which the Abolitionists criticised Lincoln so unsparingly was a cautiously worded resolution which had been submitted for their scrutiny and approval to several anti-slavery leaders as well as to a few Southern Congressmen. Having grievously disappointed the radicals by voting with only three other Northern Whigs to lay on the table a resolution with a similar end in



view, framed in unconditional terms with an intended sting for the South, Lincoln's measure was brought forward in January, 1849, in the form of imperative instructions to the House Committee on the District of Columbia. His substitute asked that the committee report a bill prohibiting any slaves not already in the District from entering it, except they be the necessary servants of officers of the government coming to the capital of their country from slave-holding states; making free the children of slave mothers born after New Year's day, 1850, the owners of the mothers being obligated to bring up the offspring under a system of apprenticeship; and introducing the machinery whereby slaves residing in Washington or Georgetown should at the will of the owners have their value appraised by a board consisting of the President of the United States, the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Treasury, when the master might receive an order on the Treasury of the United States and the slave a certificate of freedom. Fugitives seeking cover in the capital were to be returned to their Southern owners. No provision of the law should become effective unless it were approved by the citizens of the District in one of those *referenda* which popular servants in America so freely prescribe when confronted by difficult issues, for deciding which they desire to escape their fair portion of responsibility and possible blame.

In our present view of the slavery question,

coming from the man who emancipated the black race in America, this measure seems as mild as it did to Phillips, Garrison and their uncompromising allies. No man is a hero to his valet, and it is also doubtful whether he can ever stand in this relation to his business partner. What led Lincoln forward constantly, says Mr. Herndon, was his ambition, "a little engine that knew no rest,"<sup>1</sup> which strove not for riches or the objects that rivet some men's gaze, but for political advancement. When the last word is spoken and the final estimate is pronounced upon Abraham Lincoln, it will be found that his wonderful skill and sagacity in understanding the people, and his willingness and content to keep with them while reformers went far beyond and philosophers preached over their heads gave him the success that he so ardently craved. It was his caution in calculating the effect of each movement in his relation to the men about him that at length made him the unmatched leader of a democratic nation, one who not faster than the people gave expression to their already awakening, if not already actively aroused convictions upon great public questions. If he liked slavery not less than the Abolitionists, he kept his hates to himself; advocated his resolution for the gradual extinction of the evil in the District of Columbia, but wasted no tears unnecessarily when his measure failed through the angry antagonism of the South; returned from Congress after voting forty-two times,

<sup>1</sup> Herndon, p. 375.

he used to say, for the Wilmot Proviso, consistently opposed as he always was to the extension of slavery in new ground ; resumed his place on the circuit trying cases, relating anecdotes, reading some Abolitionist tracts which Mr. Herndon threw in his way in the law office ; pronouncing a eulogy over Henry Clay in the State House in Springfield, but in general playing a smaller part in the public eye than at any time in his life since the Black Hawk War. He was not inactive in the Whig behalf in the campaign of General Scott in 1852, but it was a perfunctory service in which he manifested no personal delight.

The time was ripening and through the act of a senator of Illinois the theatre of the great contest was appropriately found in Lincoln's state, the year 1854 witnessing the commencement of the intellectual struggle which led inevitably to the Civil War—the final ascendancy of a long disputed view of the American Constitution and the nature of the government which had been established under it, and the emancipation of the slaves. From this time forward Lincoln's repute was steadily cumulative and whatever his failures and mistakes in the past he made no false step henceforward.

The course of history swept on irresistibly but the future was not foreseen, though Lincoln's election lay but six, the firing upon Fort Sumter but seven, the surrender of Lee and the suppression of the South's attempt at secession only eleven years away. In retrospect the way seems as straight and

clear as the line on a surveyor's chart. But even at a much later date, when war between the sections had actually begun, the abolition of slavery was not one of its certain consequences. It is a truth, of which it is well to be reminded frequently, that "there was no time between the day that Sumter was fired upon in April, 1861, until the first of January, 1863, when the South could not have returned to the Union with every right of slavery maintained and recognized."<sup>1</sup>

Intelligent men North and South in 1854 knew only that the issue was being more closely drawn between the sections. In the South it was understood with a deepening sense that the North, strong with free labor, reenforced with immigration from Europe to the rich farming and mineral lands which were attracting multitudes to the west and northwest, was gaining vastly in political power. This advantage when put into the balance would soon outweigh the indomitable spirit, the vigilance and intellectual agility with which the Southern leaders had guarded for a generation their interests in this sectional contest. The South felt itself a thing at bay while the North, especially in that quarter in which the "New England conscience" was felt and obeyed, aware of its growing advantage pressed the moral issue at every point. In 1850 with all the skill that Clay and the old masters in compromise could bring to the work the question, it was fondly believed, had been put to its final

<sup>1</sup> McClure, "Recollections," p. 468.

rest. The North secured California as a free state, while New Mexico and Utah were organized as territories continuing the Mexican laws in reference to slavery. The domestic slave trade was prohibited in the District of Columbia. Texas was presented with ten millions of dollars for the adjustment of her boundaries and a fugitive slave law with savage penalties aimed at the station masters on the Underground Railroad and other aiders and abettors of the slave's aspirations for liberty, left all but the Abolitionists in the North and a few hotspurs in the South in a state of fancied security for the future. The statesmen of the day congratulated themselves upon the success of their last grand essay in domestic diplomacy, and the leaders of the first half of the century laid off their mantles happy in the conviction that the issue would rise no more to disturb the peace of America. It is true there were some to whom solace could not be administered so easily. One skeptic expressed his doubts through the medium of verse in a newspaper :

“ To kill twice dead a rattlesnake  
And off his scaly skin to take,  
And through his head to drive a stake,  
And every bone within him break,  
And of his flesh mince-meat to make ;  
To burn, to sear, to boil and bake,  
Then in a heap the whole to rake,  
And over it the besom shake,  
And sink it fathoms in the lake,  
Whence after all quite wide awake  
Comes back that very same old snake.”

The spirit of this poetaster's muse entered Mr. E. C. Stedman, who when John Brown was awaiting the hangman in Virginia, suggested that

" Old Brown,  
Ossawatimie Brown  
May trouble you more than ever when you nail his coffin  
down."

The same spirit a little later took a somewhat different form in the jiggish song which became the North's "Marseillaise":

" John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave  
His soul is marching on."

The "soul" of this cause lived through every crucifying experience. The issue could not be put down by all the pacificators great and little of 1850, a fact made abundantly clear four years later or as soon as Stephen A. Douglas by a discreditable bargain in the Senate of the United States, placed himself on the side of the South in an effort to reopen the slavery question and carry it into the territories. Since 1820 no one had suggested that slavery should ever exist north of 36° 30', except in Missouri. The compromise of that year was regarded in the North as practically a part of the Constitution, inviolable, described by Douglas himself only five years before as being "canonized in the hearts of the American people as a sacred thing which no ruthless hand would ever be reck-

less enough to disturb.”<sup>1</sup> The subdivision of the “Platte Country” into territories which would be candidates in no long time for statehood, again aroused the anxiety of the pro-slavery leaders who saw in that direction a further dangerous weakening of their position in reference to the North, and Douglas became their instrument. He devised, proclaimed and skilfully advocated a new principle which he may have honestly thought would be the means of maintaining peace between the two sections.

Whether sincerely meant or not a remarkable variety of intellectual acrobatics must soon be indulged in to prove the merit of his new attitude to the people of Illinois and the other northern states. He had begun badly. He had declared the Missouri Compromise “inoperative and void” and organized the two new territories of Kansas and Nebraska by a bill which passed Congress in May, 1854, under a system of “popular sovereignty.” It was another instance in which the statesman sought to escape the pains and penalties of his unpopular deeds by shifting the responsibility to the citizens. The people of any territory or state, he argued with persuasiveness and unctiousness, should themselves be the judges whether the slaveholder and the slave should live among them. For Congress to determine a matter of municipal right was a grand supererogation of authority which was not justified by any principle of law or morality. If the

<sup>1</sup> Nicolay and Hay, Vol. I, p. 351.

people of Kansas or Nebraska desired to prohibit slavery within their borders the agency was at hand and they might do so without let or hindrance from the outside.

The passage of this bill repealing the Missouri Compromise and opening to the slave masters what was securely accounted free territory, the announcement of the new system of popular sovereignty by which in the whim of a moment at the polling place, Illinois itself, and even New York and New England, might be converted into slave ground swept the North with amazement which soon developed into furious indignation. Whigs and Democrats of anti-slavery sentiments who had long resisted the appeals of the Abolition leaders for separate political action quickly organized themselves into a new party for the Congressional and state elections. In some states they immediately assumed the name Republican; everywhere they were known as "Anti-Nebraska men," opposed absolutely and unreservedly to the scheme by which the South hoped to seize Kansas, while its friend Douglas, with plausible and adroit oratory, soothed the outraged conscience of the North with his encomiums of his new discovery—as old as plebiscites, *referenda*, primary assemblies and other devices for direct government in democracies—"popular sovereignty."

Abraham Lincoln, who for five years had lived a life almost altogether apart from politics, was on his feet again and raised his voice in no uncertain



tone throughout this exciting canvass. Once more the people were confronted by an issue, the greatest he had been called upon to represent. Among all the Anti-Nebraska men in Illinois he, by common consent, was the one best qualified to meet Douglas on his return to the state, for a vindication of his remarkable course. Since Lincoln first met him in the Illinois legislature he had occupied several state offices, had sat for three terms in the lower house of Congress, and was well advanced in his second term in the United States Senate, having therefore appreciably outdistanced the orator who was to contest the ground with him in intellectual combat. He had been handsomely supported by a number of delegates for the Democratic nomination for the Presidency in 1852, and was looked upon as the champion of "Young America." As the "New Democrat" and the "Little Giant," his friends heralded him far and wide and seemed sincerely to regard him as the great man of his time.

He reached his native state late in August, and on the first day of September made his first public appearance upon the platform in Chicago, which was now his home. That city was strongly anti-slavery, and therefore pronouncedly hostile to the Kansas conspiracy. It was in the Southern part of the state called "Egypt," that Douglas's friends in his new rôle thickly abided, and he was brought face to face at once with what was very probably the least agreeable experience in his long career as a popular campaigner. The mayor of the city pre-

sided, but the crowd, after listening for a time in patience, began to hurl questions at the speaker and shouts and jeers soon converted the meeting into a pandemonium. Interruption was something that Douglas could never brook good-naturedly. Made testy and arrogant by public attention and flattery, generously accorded him on all sides for many years, he appeared at a grave disadvantage under such circumstances. The meeting came to an end with the "Little Giant" shaking his fist at the audience which he denounced as a mob, and he was left to better the impression his change of political front had created by a tour through the southern portions of the state.

When he was asked to play this ungrateful part with reference to the Missouri Compromise, in the presence of a Southern senator in Washington, he hesitated on the ground that his action would subject him to many indignities. "Every opprobrious epithet will be applied to me," he said. "I shall probably be hung in effigy in many places. It is more than probable that I may become permanently odious among those whose friendship and esteem I have heretofore possessed." This prophecy must have been forcibly recalled at the Chicago meeting, as at other times in the course of this stirring campaign.

Early in October he was brought face to face with Abraham Lincoln at the State Fair in Springfield. An audience drawn from all parts of Illinois packed the State House to hear Douglas present his

case in a lengthy speech, to which, on the following day, in the same hall to no smaller an assemblage, Lincoln addressed a reply. For four hours the Springfield lawyer's audience closely followed his argument. He unfolded the theme and described the great issue with more skill and ability than even his closest friends believed to be latent in him. He had perfected himself during the summer in the history of the slavery question, and with many appeals to law and precedent he riddled the mass of sophistry which Senator Douglas offered as a defense to his constituents for his radical change of policy. There were warm, but for the most part good-humored passages between Lincoln and Douglas as the afternoon progressed. The readiness of their leader's wit in running debate, and his uniformly equable temper, even under provoking circumstances, were now as in his future debates, a source of admiration to all of Mr. Lincoln's adherents and it was this quality, with the wealth and intimacy of the historical knowledge he brought to bear upon the discussion, helped on by the confidence always present in the fundamental righteousness of his cause, which elevated him for one of the most conspicuous services in the annals of statesmanship in this country.

Douglas's rejoinder is said by those who were present at the first of these remarkable debates (to be heard by national audiences when they were resumed in 1858) to have been unconvincing. He came out of the encounter the worse for this ventila-

tion of his doctrines, but the public a fortnight later was to enjoy another meeting of the champions in another part of the state—at Peoria. To a vast audience Douglas had spoken for upwards of three hours and when it was time for Lincoln to be heard it was almost the supper hour, whereupon with the statement that his argument would not be less lengthy than Judge Douglas's, he asked the people to repair to their provision baskets and restaurants to reassemble again in the evening and hear the exposition of the other side of the question. Lincoln, while following the outlines of his speech at Springfield, materially improved upon that effort. He regarded the Peoria address in after years as in many respects the ablest he had ever made, and since by good fortune it has been preserved in its entirety it can be enjoyed by later generations. There is infinitely more learning compressed into this speech in clear cut phrase and dignified language than in any made previously by Mr. Lincoln, and it will not suffer by comparison with his discourses in 1858. The reserve which is lacking in some of the addresses delivered after he had gained greater familiarity with his subject adds to its quality, and while it contains none of the catch phrases that were to become the bywords of popular speech, it leaves as a whole a deeper impression upon the reasoning mind than any contribution of the year to the literature of the slavery question.

The value of Lincoln's services on the stump

against Douglas in this campaign does not appear the less when we realize that he was a candidate for the seat in the United States Senate, soon to be vacated by his old challenger to the duel, James Shields. The Democrats had much at stake and Lincoln, the astute politician that he always was, had nicely calculated that his meetings with Douglas would make him the inevitable Anti-Nebraska candidate in the Legislature. His argument, unlike the Abolitionists', was not given up to a recital of the cruelties of slavery ; it was a legal arraignment of Douglas and his party for violating the pledge of the Compromise and for opening the way for the extension of the evil into new ground. He weighed his sentences carefully and little was said which could be used against him to incite the prejudices of those for whom Abolition was the most hateful of all English words. He did not hold the Southern people responsible for the origin of slavery, nor did he suggest a plan whereby they might soon rid themselves of it, although it was his belief, said he, that by this time they might have been able to devise some system of gradual emancipation. Passages that rung like these could leave no doubt as to the sympathies of Lincoln's heart in the stupendous contest which had already begun : "The declared indifference but as I think covert zeal for the spread of slavery I cannot but hate. I hate it because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world ; enables

the enemies of free institutions with plausibility to taunt us as hypocrites ; causes the real friends of freedom to doubt our sincerity ; and especially because it forces so many good men among ourselves into an open war with the very fundamental principles of civil liberty, criticising the Declaration of Independence and insisting that there is no right principle of action but self-interest."

But Lincoln was far too much of a candidate to carry his moral advantage to any indiscreet length. He drove out of town in a buggy to escape a meeting with some radical leaders who sought to bring him forward as an Abolitionist, he listened and agreed to Douglas's proposition that they should both go home speaking no more after the debate at Peoria during that campaign and wrote personal letters to his friends asking them to support him for the senatorship. "You are a member of the legislature and have a vote to give," he wrote to T. J. Henderson. "Think it over and see whether you can do better than go for me."<sup>1</sup> He protested against the placing of his name on Owen Lovejoy's new Republican state committee as an unauthorized act and called himself still a Whig.

Lincoln had again been chosen to a seat in the legislature in the election of 1854. He had not been a member of that body since 1842. He had been nominated by the Whigs and also by the Know Nothings, a committee of whom waited upon him to acquaint him of their endorsement of his candidacy.

<sup>1</sup> Lincoln, "Speeches," Vol. I, p. 209.

Their visit soon ended. "Who are the native Americans?" asked Lincoln pointedly. "Do they not wear the breech clout and carry the tomahawk? We pushed them from their homes and now turn upon others not fortunate enough to come over here so early as we or our forefathers. Gentlemen of the committee your party is wrong in principle." He then told them a story: "I had some time ago an Irishman named Patrick cultivating my garden. One morning I went out to see how he was getting on. 'Mr. Lincoln, what do yez think of these Know Nothings?' he inquired of me. I explained what they were trying to do and asked Pat why he had not been born in America. 'Faith,' he replied, 'I wanted to but me mother wouldn't let me.'" With this characteristic anecdote the delegation took its departure.<sup>1</sup> In spite of his rejection of Know Nothing support he was elected as one of the representatives from Sangamon County by a majority of about 650 votes.

It was clear that if he were to be a candidate for United States senator he must resign his seat in the legislature, which as luck would have it was narrowly Anti-Nebraska. This he did, relying upon his majority as an assurance of the choice of a Whig to succeed him at the by-election. But the Democrats, by some means never fully explained, captured the district. This unforeseen result further reduced the majority, though the prize would still have been his but for the obstinacy of

<sup>1</sup> Iowa Historical Records for 1896, p. 497.

five anti-slavery members of Democratic antecedents who would on no account vote for a Whig. They were casting their votes steadfastly for Lyman Trumbull, a Democrat upon every subject but the slavery issue. Lincoln, on the tenth ballot, after a formidable show of strength, rather than see the office go to a Nebraska man recommended his followers to support Mr. Trumbull, which they did, thus electing him as Douglas's colleague at Washington.

Lincoln now very clearly foresaw that he must make his adieus to the Whig party, which was in the stages of its final dissolution, and find new political affiliations. To say that he was a leader in this movement would be to commit a great mistake, since he had always discouraged everything that savored of haste. At every point now until his career came to its untimely end he held himself in reserve, coming forward to speak and act only when he was fully satisfied that a strong body of public opinion was ready to lend support to his movements. Scouts were manœuvring in advance, and he surveyed their operations with a diligent eye, but however much his own feelings pressed for hard words and radical measures he bit his lips, to use his own language, and kept quiet.<sup>1</sup>

In the summer of 1855 he was so far behind the advance column that he seemed to be a man without a party. Douglas's principle of popular sovereignty had proven to be precisely what the Anti-

<sup>1</sup> Lincoln, "Speeches," Vol. I, p. 216.



Nebraska men anticipated, "squatter sovereignty." The struggle had begun for the possession of Kansas, bands of ruffians from Missouri crossing the line, where they came into conflict with settlers sent forward by colonization societies in the free states. Some seized upon the fertile and valuable lands which were spread out before them ; others roved over the country as armed adventurers, burning, shooting and pillaging with impunity, the forces working for order sent out by President Pierce serving only to augment the strife, since they were active on the pro-slavery side. The slave system was wholly unsuited to the western American prairies, a fact which the Southern people were slow to understand. The climate was not congenial to the negro and the industries to be developed were not of a kind in which bond-servants and gangs of laborers under overseers could be utilized with economic advantage. The failure of the struggle from this point forward was absolutely certain, foreordained by some power outside the range of morals or politics.

The territorial contest which actually developed into civil war disturbed the nation to its centre. The more Kansas bled the more determined was each party to possess itself of the state or, more properly speaking, of her two senators and one or two representatives, and the wearisome story of outrages at the polls, rump legislatures and conventions and slave and free state constitutions is the only reply posterity will ever require to Douglas's

ingenious arguments for the "sovereignty" of the people as a method of solving the slavery question. The gathering together of the elements to enter their protest at the ballot-box against what Sumner called "the crime against Kansas," proceeded in every Northern state. The Republican party had been born in 1854, but Lincoln was still not a republican. To Speed he wrote in August, 1855: "You inquire where I now stand. That is a disputed point. I think I am a Whig; but others say there are no Whigs and that I am an Abolitionist. When I was at Washington I voted for the Wilmot Proviso as good as forty times; and I never heard of any one attempting to unwhig me for that. I now do no more than oppose the extension of slavery. I am not a Know Nothing, that is certain. How could I be? How can any one who abhors the oppression of negroes be in favor of degrading classes of white people? Our progress in degeneracy appears to me to be pretty rapid. As a nation we began by declaring that 'all men are created equal.' We now practically read it 'all men are created equal except negroes.' When the Know Nothings get control it will read 'all men are created equal except negroes and foreigners and Catholics.' When it comes to this I shall prefer emigrating to some country where they make no pretense of loving liberty."

The Republican party of Illinois held its first state convention of delegates at Bloomington on May 29, 1856, in answer to a call which had been signed by a number of forward spirits, Lincoln's

name having been appended in his absence and without his authority by his partner, William H. Herndon.<sup>1</sup> Although a former partner, Major John T. Stuart, predicted that the act would ruin the political future of the Springfield leader Lincoln did not repudiate the act, attended the convention and there made the most radical declarations which had yet publicly come from his lips. His speech was an eloquent appeal to the people of the state to flock to the Republican standard. He asked them to

"Come as the winds come when forests are rended ;  
Come as the waves come when navies are stranded,"

and the audience rising to its feet, cheer following upon cheer felt itself baptized in the fires of a new moral faith. "His speech," wrote Herndon, who was present, and for whose taste Lincoln had been showing too much deliberation, "was full of fire and energy and force ; it was logic ; it was pathos ; it was enthusiasm ; it was justice, equity, truth and right set ablaze by the divine fires of a soul maddened by the wrong ; it was hard, heavy, knotty, gnarly, backed with wrath. I attempted for about fifteen minutes, as was usual with me then, to take notes, but at the end of that time I threw pen and paper away and lived only in the inspiration of the hour. If Mr. Lincoln was six feet four inches high usually, at Bloomington that day he was seven feet and inspired at that."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Herndon, p. 382.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 384.

In the campaign which ensued Lincoln was the unquestioned leader of his party in Illinois. The Republican national convention which assembled in Philadelphia in June, nominated John C. Fremont for President and denounced slavery as a relic of barbarism. For the second place on the ticket Mr. Lincoln received the support of 110 delegates, a spontaneous tribute which, although it did not bring him the nomination for the Vice-Presidency, was a national recognition of his abilities and services, and entrenched him still more securely in the good opinions of Republicans everywhere. Requests for speeches reached him from every part of his own state; campaign committees in neighboring states called upon him to come and help them. He headed the Fremont electoral ticket in Illinois, and through the summer and autumn delivered more than fifty addresses. He bent his energies particularly to the task of reducing the strength of Fillmore, and the third party candidates which, had it been possible to carry the process a little farther, would have placed the state securely on the Republican side, as James Buchanan's plurality was less than 10,000 votes.

In one of those strange lapses which are among the least comprehensible of the mysteries of Lincoln's character, he during the next two years produced little to suggest the brilliant work of the past, of 1854 or 1856, or the magnificent service he was to perform in the near future. A speech at Chicago after Buchanan was elected and another in

Springfield in June, 1857, indicate no advancement in thought or improvement in oratorical manner. In fact there is in both a marked falling away from the dignity and polish marking his earlier deliverances.

At Galena, during the campaign of 1856, Lincoln, in the significant speech in which he had said in rebuttal of the charge that the Republicans were working for a disruption of the nation, "We do not want to dissolve the Union : you shall not," had also let fall a few remarks about the binding force of decisions of the Supreme Court. He said : "I grant you that an unconstitutional act is not a law ; but I do not ask and will not take your construction of the constitution. The Supreme Court of the United States is the tribunal to decide such a question and we will submit to its decisions ; and if you do also there will be an end of the matter. Will you ? If not, who are the disunionists, you or we ?" It must have been with no little embarrassment therefore that in a few months the time came for him to reject the authority of the Supreme Court. A few days after "Old Buck's" inauguration as President that tribunal announced its decision in the case of Dred Scott and nothing else was needed except "the consent of the governed," the last resort in democracies, to make complete the triumph of Douglas's scheme to cast aside the compromises in favor of popular sovereignty. The Supreme Court, with a divided bench, it is true, decided that negroes could never become citizens of the United States, that

slaves must be regarded as property entitled to legal protection as such in every part of the Union, and that the Missouri Compromise and similar prohibitory acts were unconstitutional. What the North regarded as a conspiracy and the last card in a long-drawn-out game, which, if it failed, would induce several states to make good their threat to secede from the Union, had involved every one of the three departments of government and the appeal must now be made directly to the nation at large.

Lincoln pinned his faith to the Supreme Court in 1856; it was Douglas's opportunity to submit his case to that body's final decision in 1857. The excitement increased and the Northern people were in a veritable furore. Public indignation found expression in every public forum, from legislatures and newspapers, with their wide audiences, down to the smallest village debating society which met in the basement of some church or school. The North was suddenly driven into the most unhappy position of being compelled to explain why it demanded of the South a quiet submission to the acts of the regular agencies of government, when it now openly resisted the determination of a supreme body, which all Americans are wont to regard with peculiar veneration. Lincoln was not ready to precipitate himself into this discussion until 1858, when the time was again at hand for the choice of a United States senator. In 1854 he had failed by a very narrow margin to make himself Douglas's colleague

at Washington ; peculiar interest now attached to the undertaking from the fact that he could contest Douglas's own seat, and draw the issue directly with the idol of the Democracy reincarnated with the spirit of popular sovereignty.

In April, the Democrats in their state convention endorsed Senator Douglas's political course, and made him their candidate for reelection. In June, the Republican state convention resolved "that Abraham Lincoln is the first and only choice of the Republicans of Illinois for the United States Senate as the successor of Stephen A. Douglas." It is an error to suppose that Lincoln did not anticipate this nomination, and did not exert his influence, in so far as his personal intervention was needed to bring it about. He prepared his speech most carefully in writing, and memorized it. It was with particular deliberation and the nice balancing of the good and bad consequences that he prepared the opening passages which soon became household words, drawing to him in counsel a number of his friends who seem pretty generally to have discouraged the utterance. Already on August 15, 1855, he had written to George Robertson of Kentucky that "our political problem now is, Can we as a nation continue together permanently forever, half slave and half free?"<sup>1</sup> and he had had something to say on the same point in his brilliant Bloomington speech in 1856, although he was strongly recommended by his friends not to indulge

<sup>1</sup> "Speeches," Vol. I, p. 216.



in the repetition of such sentiments.<sup>1</sup> Now he amplified the thought, and in accepting the nomination for the United States senatorship, deliberately declared that the agitation of the slavery question "will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed. 'A house divided against itself cannot stand.' I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall, but I expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the states, old as well as new, North as well as South."

In this speech Lincoln stated the faith that was in him, and with principles fairly and plainly set forth, he felt himself well fortified for a contest which he looked forward to with no misgivings. He did not underestimate the strength and resource of his adversary. He had met Douglas before. Their lives had been cast in the same lines by some inexplicable fate for more than twenty years, and now they would have a final crossing of swords for the supremacy of their principles.

<sup>1</sup> Herndon, p. 398.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE GREAT DEBATES

DOUGLAS had entered the Senate of the United States in the same year Lincoln had arrived at Washington to begin his single term in the other house of Congress. He was about completing his second term as a Senator of Illinois, and would now go before the people on his popular sovereignty issue, asking them to return a legislature to Springfield which would reelect him to his exalted office for another period of six years. Douglas was either too intent upon his reendorsement by the people in a state in which the defeat of 1854 still rankled in his memory, or else his conscience sincerely revolted at the spectacle in Kansas. At any rate he had taken occasion to quarrel with President Buchanan and his Southern allies, and refused to support them in their attempt to admit the state under the Lecompton constitution. He would stand or fall, he declared, upon the principle that the people should decide whether they would or would not have slavery in their midst. But this decision must be fair. His principle did not contemplate the use of fraud and force in imposing statutes and constitutions upon an unwilling people, a declaration which strengthened him mightily in his own

state and would doubtless have enabled him to gain an overwhelming triumph, but for the fact that his progress was contested by the great form of Abraham Lincoln, now again raised to the height of seven feet, quick with humor, intelligence and eloquence, speaking from an honest heart. Horace Greeley and other anti-slavery leaders recommended that Douglas's reelection should not be opposed as a reward for his course on the Lecompton question. Though a sinner somewhat late in returning, they conceived that he might still further repent. Lincoln did not entertain any such opinion, and it greatly complicated the task that lay before him to have this view propagated by men who should have been on his side unreservedly.

Douglas, moreover, was arrogant and little disposed to brook opposition gracefully. Nearly twelve years a Senator of the United States, prominent in every matter of legislation, to whom leaders North and South came in acknowledgment of his brilliant capacity, he looked upon Lincoln's undertaking to contest the ground with him for a reelection as presumptuous in high degree. Much power and the consciousness of his political strength had made him little fit to lead a Democratic party. The administrative influence of the Illinois Central Railroad was undividedly exerted on his side, and special trains were freely placed at his disposal. Trimmed with flags and bunting, with cannon roaring salutes, his luxurious coaches sped over the rails from town to town. Brass bands and heralds

with trumpets and colored banners announced his coming, and he was received by mayors and aldermen and bodies of distinguished citizens serving on reception committees, with every sign of jubilation and pomp, like some conquering hero returned from a triumphant war. He arrived in Illinois in July, liberally supplied with funds which it was said he had secured in the East, and opened his campaign with a speech on the ninth of that month from the balcony of a hotel in Chicago. This deliverance was meant to be a reply to the carefully worded oration with which Lincoln had accepted the Republican nomination, including that passage soon to become famous likening the condition of the country to the Scriptural "house divided against itself." Lincoln sat upon the platform while Douglas addressed the immense assemblage, and on the next day replied from the same rostrum in an argument which was the basis for much of the discourse of both candidates in the following months. Leaving Chicago, Douglas passed to Bloomington, where he spoke on July 16th, and upon the 17th his train, with his artillery and brass band, invaded Lincoln's own city of Springfield. Upon this occasion Douglas spoke in the afternoon and Lincoln in the evening, and the danger was great that the Democrats with "their thunderings of cannon, their marching and music, their fizzle-gigs and fireworks"<sup>1</sup> might sweep the state by mere brute excitement.

<sup>1</sup>Lincoln, "Speeches," Vol. I, p. 262.

To forestall any such result, Lincoln, in consultation with the Republican campaign managers, proposed a series of debates. The meetings at Chicago and Springfield had practically assumed this form, and it was designed now, if Douglas would agree, that the opening arguments and the rejoinders should be made upon the same day from a common platform, in some specified manner, under rules mutually agreeable to the contesting candidates. On July 24th Lincoln issued his challenge, and Douglas after some parrying of the suggestion, because it had not been sooner offered agreed to seven joint meetings, one in each Congressional district, barring the Chicago and Springfield districts, viz. : at Ottawa, Freeport, Jonesboro, Charleston, Galesburg, Quincy and Alton. Two meetings were fixed for August, two for September and three for October. It was specified that one speaker should open the discussion for an hour, being followed by the other for an hour and a half, when the first would be allowed a half hour to conclude the debate. The positions of the two men under the arrangement were to be alternated, and Douglas not very magnanimously reserved to himself four openings and closes to Lincoln's three, a condition the latter accepted, though not without shrewdly directing attention to the inequality of the terms which the powerful senator had imposed.

Lincoln conducted a canvass very different from his opponent's because of the meagreness of his means. While Douglas is supposed to have ex-

pended \$50,000, it was with great difficulty that Lincoln could secure a few hundred dollars to meet the necessary demands of his campaign, \$250 of which he was himself obliged afterward to contribute to make up the deficit incurred by the Republican committee, a sum paid without objection since having "the post of honor," as he observed it was not for him to be "over nice." No special trains, or bands of music, or cannon, or receptions, or companies of marching men added *éclat* to his movements from place to place. He came with his followers in "prairie schooners," stopped at humble inns, and if his addresses produced so much enthusiasm at times that he was borne off upon the shoulders of his friends, it was not to any couch of luxury to rest from the weary toil of continuous public speaking. Douglas had the advantage which the prestige of office always gives, and not only as a Senator but as a likely future President of the United States, a destiny his friends fully expected him to fulfil. "They have seen in his round, jolly, fruitful face," said Lincoln in a lighter passage in one of his speeches in this campaign, "post-offices, land-offices, marshalships and cabinet appointments, chargéships and foreign missions bursting and sprouting out in wonderful exuberance, ready to be laid hold of by their greedy hands. On the contrary," Lincoln continued, "nobody has ever expected me to be President. In my poor, lean, lank face nobody has ever seen that any cabbages were sprouting out."

Lincoln suffered a disadvantage too in that the state was districted in the Democratic interest. He declared afterwards to his friends that he did not expect to elect a Republican legislature. The apportionment had been made at a time when the proportion of population in the southern part of the state in what was called "Egypt" was greater than in the north, which by Chicago's rapid settlement by anti-slavery elements was entitled to a representation at Springfield, it had not yet come to possess. "You can't overturn a pyramid," Lincoln remarked, "but you can undermine it; that's what I have been trying to do." This he did do, and it was not very long, as future events disclosed, before the structure would topple and fall at his feet.

There was no hall in the Illinois of that day, nor are there any in that state now, sufficiently large to admit the great crowds which gathered from places many miles distant to hear Lincoln and Douglas expound the slavery question. In Freeport the mass of people gathered in a common under the oaks and elms on the banks of Rock River; at Ottawa the platform was erected in a public square under the branches of the locust trees, and at Quincy the two leaders spoke to an audience in an open space that stretched away to the Mississippi. Everywhere there were vast concourses of people on seats, reclining in groups on the ground and in their carriages and farm wagons, many of whom could not hear the speakers' words by any possibility. At Charleston it is estimated

that fully 20,000 people who camped in the groves at night, were assembled in front of the speakers' stand. Douglas was a practiced open air orator, and Lincoln's high clear voice was accustomed to the task of addressing assemblages literally covering acres of ground. Yet, although silence was requested in order that the sound might be conveyed over the greatest possible distance, it was entirely vain to undertake to bring such crowds within the range of human hearing.

The first meeting at Ottawa in the northern part of the state was marked by some amiable interchanges in which as Lincoln observed in his letter to a friend the next day "the fire flew some," though neither man was stirred to his true depths. The antagonists were but measuring their swords for their later contests in which no quarter was asked or given, and accusations of bad faith, false statement and corrupt motive were freely mixed with learned allusions to the fundamental doctrines of the constitution. "I was aware when it was first agreed that Judge Douglas and I were to have these seven joint discussions," said Lincoln at Quincy, "that they were the successive acts of a drama to be enacted not merely in the face of audiences like this, but in the face of the nation and to some extent by my relation to him, and not from anything in myself, in the face of the world." He was anxious therefore that they should be conducted with dignity, and in the good temper which would befit the vast audiences by which they would be

heard. That Lincoln was not the first to err the published records of the debates will clearly prove.

Douglas went forward on the theory that *qui s'excuse s'accuse* and promptly put forth his charge that Lincoln as a Whig and Trumbull as a Democrat, had formed a combination to "abolitionize" their respective parties for which service the first would take General Shields' place as Senator in 1854, the second receiving the promise of the seat to be filled in 1858. Plans had miscarried and the two "Black Republicans" were compelled to change their places, but were still acting harmoniously in an effort to carry out the terms of the bargain. It was with peculiar delight also that Douglas referred to Lincoln's opposition while in Congress to the Mexican War, because the first blood was not shed upon the right "spot," an amusing thrust at the "Spot Resolutions" which lost the Sangamon district to the Whig party in 1848. These two personal charges in connection with a third that as a young man he had been a "grocery keeper" were calculated to aggravate Lincoln quite as much as that one, with which he responded, stung the pride of Douglas.

Lincoln at Springfield, in the speech in which he made his famous declaration about the house divided against itself, had alluded to a plan preconcerted by Stephen, Franklin, Roger and James to bring the slavery question to its present pass through the repeal of the Missouri Compromise and the establishment in its stead of the popular sover-



eignty theory, followed by the Kansas scheme and the Dred Scott decision. These things he contended, as great numbers of people implicitly believed, were but single parts of a general conspiracy. This statement repeated at Ottawa drew from Douglas (Stephen) the declaration that to utter such a charge, calculated as it was "to bring down and destroy the purest and best of living men," was an unpardonable presumption on the part of Lincoln who had not "character enough for integrity and truth merely on his own *ipse dixit* to arraign President Buchanan [James], President Pierce [Franklin] and nine judges of the Supreme Court [Roger and his associates] not one of whom would be complimented by being put on an equality with him." If it be said that this was not the retort courteous it is a fair measure of the opponent whom Lincoln was compelled to face and the language employed on this occasion must be accounted mild in comparison with that which was indulged in as the campaign progressed. The leaders with their respective friends were traveling and speaking constantly: the debates twice a month did not represent a tithe of what even these two men were saying to the people of Illinois upon an issue that absorbed public attention in greater degree than anything presented to them since the famous Harrison campaign of 1840.

Douglas was trivial. He did not hesitate to call attention to the fact if Lincoln failed to consume the time allotted him and concluded, when this was

the case to the amusement of the crowd, that he had stopped because he could think of nothing more to say. Another time he took advantage of Lincoln's being carried from the platform on the shoulders of his enthusiastic friends and alleged that he had been used up in the contest.

The "Little Giant" was imperious and truculent. He sought to have it appear that Lincoln was wholly in his clutches, that in his grip he was as a mouse being shaken by a mastiff.

He was abusive. He flung the lie in its plainest terms and unconcealed by polite verbiage, charged forgery, denied palpable facts, twisted and dodged opposing arguments and appealed with all the trickery of the demagogue to the passions and prejudices of the people gathered before him. It was a favorite device for instance to ask his friends not to interrupt his discourse with cheers, lest valuable time which he wished to devote to his argument be fruitlessly consumed. He accused his adversary of base insinuations and a generally reprehensible manner in debate when he was himself the leader in the offense. Any interjection by the crowd was likely to be regarded as a *défi* calling for some opprobrious allusion to the mob spirit prevalent in the "Black Republican" party. He wished it to be observed that the Democrats had politer manners and did not require reproof from the speaker's stand. He hurled epithets when nettled in the discussion with a fluency that scarcely another speaker of his day

could command. A Republican was always a "Black Republican" despite interruptions in Abolition towns of "white, white" and a playful request from time to time to change the color and "make it a little brown." Negroes were stumping the state for "their brother Abe," and Douglas at the head of a party which believed that America should be governed by Europeans and the children of Europeans was conducting a war upon "Father Giddings, the high priest of Abolitionism," Fred Douglas, who had hovered on the outside of one of the audiences, sitting in an open barouche beside a white woman and her daughter, "Parson" Lovejoy, Lincoln and the "whole white, black and mixed drove." Lincoln and Trumbull were "disappointed politicians" "who had retired or had been driven into obscurity by an outraged constituency because of their political sins," only to spring up again now in the ruins of the parties they had conspired to destroy.

Douglas's consciousness of his superiority over his adversary, and indeed every other man in the state, was unconcealed. He reiterated that he had lived in Illinois for twenty-five years, and his record was a matter of common knowledge to the people. "Lincoln asks you to elect him to the United States Senate to-day," he continued, "solely because he and Trumbull can slander me." He went so far as to declare at Galesburg that Lincoln was being aided in his canvass by Federal patronage freely dispensed at Washington, to

Republican advantage in Illinois as a punishment for his (Douglas's) action in opposing the admission of Kansas under the Lecompton constitution. In short, he was deterred by no feeling of humility, no sense of fairness, no considerations of respect for the truth, and resorted to every device of his fertile mind and his fluent tongue to accomplish his reelection and perpetuate his supremacy. In one of his speeches Douglas denounced the charge that he had had a part in the Stephen, Franklin, Roger and James conspiracy as "an infamous lie," and no meeting was allowed to pass without recourse to language equally unparliamentary.

Lincoln, more careful in statement but aggressive and bold in attack, and absolutely inflexible in position when it was a question of defending his rights, was far less likely to be led into passionate utterance. "I set out in this campaign," he remarked in his speech of July 17, at Springfield, "with the intention of conducting it as a gentleman, in substance at least if not in the outside polish. The latter I shall never be, but that which constitutes the inside of a gentleman I hope I understand, and am not less inclined to practice than others." At Freeport he remarked in his calm but effective manner: "It is most extraordinary that Judge Douglas should so far forget all the suggestions of justice to an adversary, or of prudence to himself, as to venture upon the assertion of that which the slightest investigation would have shown him to be false." Again Lin-

coln complained that Douglas was "playing cuttlefish," which as was explained is a small species of fish that has no mode of defending itself when pursued except by throwing out a black fluid which makes the water so dark the enemy cannot see it, and thus escapes. Another time, at Jonesboro, Lincoln remarked with considerable directness and force: "I don't want to have a fight with Judge Douglas and I have no way of making an argument up into the consistency of a corn-cob and stopping his mouth with it." The inimitable response to Douglas's complaint at Freeport that the crowd, which was sympathetically Republican, interrupted his speech has often been admired. "I wish to remind you," said Douglas in his testy way when some of his unpopular utterances raised a clamor in the audience, "that while Mr. Lincoln was speaking there was not a Democrat vulgar and blackguard enough to interrupt him. But I know that the shoe is pinching you. I am clinching Lincoln now and you are scared to death for the result. I have seen this thing before. I have seen men make appointments for joint discussions, and the moment their man has been heard, try to interrupt and prevent a fair hearing of the other side. I have seen your mobs before and defy your wrath."

Lincoln rising for the rejoinder remarked: "The first thing I have to say to you is a word in regard to Judge Douglas's declaration about the 'vulgarity and blackguardism' in the audience—

that no such thing as he says was shown by any Democrat while I was speaking. Now I only wish by way of reply to say that while I was speaking I used no 'vulgarity or blackguardism' toward any Democrat."

Lincoln, as Douglas freely predicted, was under the greatest disadvantage with his principles in "lower Egypt" whither he was led to the third joint debate. It was here at Jonesboro that the Republican candidate took his unscrupulous adversary to task for the canard about his being carried off the debating stand in an exhausted condition. In this connection Lincoln observed: "I don't want to quarrel with Judge Douglas—to call him a liar—but when I come square up to him I don't know what else to call him, if I must tell the truth out."

While this language shows material progress in the descent to Douglas's standards in debate, it was in the meeting at Charleston in unfriendly surroundings, on September 18, that Lincoln's ire rose to its highest pitch and led him into the use of words which upon reflection he must have regretted very deeply. The explanation of his thus forgetting the rules he would have preferred to observe even under the greatest provocation is that he was resenting gross attacks not upon himself, but upon his friend Senator Trumbull. In this debate Lincoln suggested to Douglas that "it will not avail him at all that he swells himself up, takes on dignity, and calls people liars." When he will not tell what the

true reason was for certain action on the Kansas bill, said Lincoln pursuing the subject, "he stands in the attitude of an accused thief who has stolen goods in his possession, and when called to account refuses to tell where he got them." In the midst of his discourse, to illustrate the untruth of the story concerning his policy on the Mexican War, he turned to the crowd on the platform, seized O. B. Ficklin, a Democrat who had been a member of Congress with him in the forties, and who knew personally that Douglas "lied," leading the man forward as a witness with such muscular force that he never forgot the experience. The warmth of Lincoln's argument at this meeting exceeded that displayed by him at any other time in the canvass, and his reasoning, while upon a point of no interest to posterity, was unanswerable. Douglas could not keep his seat. He walked rapidly up and down the platform, watch in hand, "his long grizzled hair waving in the wind," says a spectator, "like the shaggy locks of an enraged lion."<sup>1</sup> Lincoln came to the point. "Why does he not answer the facts? . . . If you have ever studied geometry you remember that by a course of reasoning, Euclid proves that all the angles in a triangle are equal to two right angles. Euclid has shown how to work it out. Now if you undertook to disprove that proposition, to show that it was erroneous, would you do it by calling Euclid a liar? That is the way Judge Douglas answers Trumbull." This sentence

<sup>1</sup> Arnold, p. 148.

finished, Douglas cried out excitedly, "Sit down, Lincoln, sit down. Your time's up," and turning around Lincoln said imperturbably, as a man in complete command of the situation, "I will. I will *quit*. I believe my time is up." "Douglas has had enough," observed an occupant of the platform, and in this manner ended what was without question the most spectacular of all the meetings between the two great political leaders of Illinois.

But there was vastly more than personality, polite and impolite, in this memorable canvass. Douglas directed his argument to three main propositions upon which he conceived that Lincoln was particularly vulnerable in the then existing state of public opinion in Illinois. The first of these was the equality of the negro and the white man; the second Lincoln's theory that the republic could not endure half slave and half free, and the third the finality of the Dred Scott decision. The Republican candidate occupied himself whenever he was put upon the defensive in meeting these three issues. While each speaker aimed by propounding questions to lead the other unwarily into some rashness of statement that could be employed to partisan advantage, it was not in this exercise that anything of an effective nature was contributed to the anti-slavery discussion. Nor did attack upon or defense of popular sovereignty play so prominent a part in the debates as in 1854, when the principle was freshly enunciated, and when Douglas had not yet conciliated his constituents through his course upon



the bills to admit Kansas under a slave constitution. While Lincoln reminded the audiences that Douglas did not care whether slavery was "voted down or voted up," and satirically referred, drolly imitating Douglas's manner to the "gur-reat pur-rinciple" of popular sovereignty, otherwise known as squatter sovereignty and the "sacred right of self-government," which was nothing more, he repeated, than the doctrine "that if one man would enslave another no third man should object," political discussion had passed the point when interest was acute in the precise weapon that had dealt the blow of death at the Missouri Compromise.

It was Douglas's desire, and so shrewd a politician knew the temper of the people and the time, to confuse Lincoln with the Abolitionists than which by curious perversion of moral ideas, there was no more hideous word in the English language in the South, and few that aroused greater loathing in the minds of large bodies of people in the northern states. At Charleston he publicly declared that his principal object was to "show up" his adversary's "negro equality doctrines." On this line he was "driving Lincoln to the wall," for "white men would not support his rank Abolitionism." That Lincoln was put upon his defense at every point on this question, especially in the southern part of the state, becomes very clear upon a reading of this remarkable series of speeches. He was compelled at every meeting to deny unequivocally

cally that he had any hand in the early negotiations for the formation of the Republican party, and it was fortunate indeed for him that he had refused to cooperate with the ardent spirits, such as Mr. Lovejoy, who had sought to take him into their councils in 1854. He could now declare that he had had no part in the adoption of their radical platforms. He could declare that he never had been and was not now in favor of the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law. He could say that if in Congress he might, though it would be with sincere regret, vote to admit more slave states into the Union, if the people of the territories had freely expressed themselves in favor of slaveholding. He was able even to assert regarding Henry Clay's proposition to "sweep from our capital that foul blot upon the nation," the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, that he would advocate only gradual action after a vote of the people with compensation to the owners of slaves. Such declarations judged by the standards which Lincoln established for himself five or six years later do not seem very well fitted to confuse him in the public mind with the Abolitionists, but Douglas pursued him at every point at which his record was at all susceptible of an interpretation of sympathetic alliance with the radicals.

It was Douglas's constant endeavor also to prove that Lincoln had two sets of principles for the two ends of the state. In the north he threatened dire consequences if what Lincoln said should reach the

ears of the people in "Egypt." In Egypt he freely observed that sentiments were expressed which could not be repeated at Freeport or Chicago. The principles of the Republicans, he said, "are jet black in the north, in the centre they are in color a decent mulatto, and in lower Egypt they are almost white."

Douglas, on his side, nowhere feared openly to express his sentiments on the race question, and doubtless he interpreted the public mood very accurately. To him all that was said of the equality of men in the Declaration of Independence and other charts of liberty and right was not intended for the negro's benefit. He was in the position of the French woman who said of her butler when asked why she permitted a man to come to her with her chocolate while she was in undress—"Appelles-tu ça un homme," and of the young maiden in Virginia who shocked the sensibilities of Mrs. Trollope when she was among us, by lacing her stays in the presence of a black footman. "I do not regard the negro as my equal," said he at Ottawa, "and positively deny that he is my brother or any kin to me whatever." He had not yet uttered that unfortunate declaration which Lincoln used against him a little later, that in all contests between the negro and the white man he was for the white man, and in all questions between the negro and the crocodile he was for the negro.<sup>1</sup> However he did say very plainly in more than one debate: "I hold

<sup>1</sup> Douglas's Speech at Memphis, Tenn.

that a negro is not and never ought to be a citizen of the United States. I hold that this government was made on the white basis by white men for the benefit of white men and their posterity forever, and should be administered by white men and their posterity." At Alton in pursuit of the same idea he observed: "I hold that the signers of the Declaration of Independence had no reference to negroes at all when they declared all men to be created equal. They did not mean negroes, nor the savage Indians, nor the Feejee Islanders, nor any other barbarous race. They were speaking of white men." In urging such a view it is certain that Judge Douglas went to the extreme limit of what as a political candidate in 1858 it was feasible for him to declare to the people of Illinois for whose suffrages he asked.

Lincoln did not hesitate to draw him into combat upon this ground. He used to say that he hated to see the fugitive slaves carried back "to their stripes and unrequited toil."<sup>1</sup> He told Cassius M. Clay that "the man who raised the corn should eat the corn," and in the opening debate at Ottawa, in 1858, he repeated what he had first said in his Springfield speech, four years before. He was unwilling to be led into a false position as the advocate of the equality of the white man and the negro in all respects. "But," he continued, rising impressively to his full height, "in the right to eat the bread without the leave of anybody else which his own

<sup>1</sup> "Speeches," Vol. I, p. 216.

hand earns he is my equal, and the equal of Judge Douglas, and the equal of every living man." He stoutly combatted the doctrine that the black man was not provided for in the guarantees of liberty in the Declaration of Independence, "as having a tendency to dehumanize the negro—to take away from him the right of ever striving to be a man," and as "one of a thousand things constantly done in these days to prepare the public mind to make property, and nothing but property, of the negro in all the states of this Union."

There is not a shade of difference, Lincoln said at Alton, between the theory which supports slavery and that which justifies the king who would rule by Divine Right. "It is the same spirit that says, You toil and work and earn bread and I'll eat it. No matter in what shape it comes, whether from the mouth of a king who seeks to bestride the people of his own nation and live by the fruit of their labor or from one race of men as an apology for enslaving another race it is the same tyrannical principle."

Nevertheless Lincoln at many places in the course of the campaign felt it to be an obligation in fairness to his ambition to accomplish his Democratic opponent's defeat to qualify and still further explain his doctrine of equality. To Douglas's pretended delight Lincoln remarked in his opening speech in the fourth joint debate at Charleston, a question as to his exact position on the point having been propounded to him by an old gentleman at his

hotel :—"I will say that I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races—that I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of making voters or jurors of negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with the white people, and I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will forever forbid the two living together on terms of social and political equality."<sup>1</sup>

This very positive statement against the enfranchisement of the black man was perhaps of greater interest and meaning both to negrophile and negrophobe than any other passage uttered by Mr. Lincoln in the debates. It was well understood what were his own and every other "Black Republican's" views on the subject of miscegenation which Douglas and his friends professed to believe was the certain consequence of the theory of equality. "I do not understand that because I do not want a negro woman for a slave I must necessarily want her for a wife," said Lincoln very clearly. "My understanding is that I can just let her alone. I am now in my fiftieth year and I certainly never have had a black woman for either a slave or a wife. So it seems to me quite possible for us to get along without making either slaves or wives of negroes."

The idea entertained by Judge Douglas that he

<sup>1</sup> "Speeches," Vol. I, p. 369.

was in favor of the perfect social and political equality of the races, Lincoln said at another time, is "but a specious and fantastic arrangement of words by which a man can prove a horse-chestnut to be a chestnut horse."

- The second point at which Lincoln was put upon the defensive was, as his friends had foreseen, his statement about the certain fall of a house divided against itself, and the impossibility of the nation enduring permanently half slave and half free. Upon this subject with these words before him Douglas charged that his opponent was inviting "a war of sections, a war between Illinois and Kentucky, a war between the free states and the slave states, a war between the North and the South." Lincoln resented such an interpretation of his utterances. He had made only a prophecy; expressed no desire. He was firm in his conviction that the republic had been deflected from the course in which it had been set by its founders. With historical evidence as his witness at every point he declared that it had been the early policy of the government by all the means in its power, to check the growth and spread of slavery, and to prepare the way for its "ultimate extinction." Instead of this policy to-day what did the nation see? The invention of the cotton-gin had made slavery a national necessity in the opinion of the Southern leaders, and the republic passed from the basis upon which it had been placed by the "Fathers" to the cotton-gin basis. The question, the platforms of both old

parties declared, had been "forever" disposed of by the Compromises of 1850. Then came Popular Sovereignty. In the Nebraska bill "the last tip of the last joint of the old serpent's tail was just drawing out of view,"<sup>1</sup> but the dispute still raged and gained in virulent headway. "If Kansas should sink to-day and leave a great vacant space in the earth's surface," said Lincoln, "this vexed question would still be among us." Slavery, he repeated, must be placed "where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction." He did not deceive himself in the thought that extinction would come in a day or a year or two years, but that it would come he had prophesied, and there was no reason for him to change his belief. The suggestion, it is true, savored of civil war. "The party to which Lincoln belongs," said Douglas at Quincy, "is bounded and limited by geographical lines. With this principle they cannot even cross the Mississippi River on your ferry-boats. They cannot cross over the Ohio into Kentucky. Lincoln himself cannot visit the land of his fathers, the scenes of his childhood, the graves of his ancestors, and carry his Abolition principles as he declared them at Chicago with him. This Republican organization appeals to the North against the South; it appeals to Northern passion, Northern prejudice and Northern ambition against Southern people, Southern states and Southern institutions."

<sup>1</sup> Lincoln at Alton.



To such an argument Lincoln replied that Douglas himself was fast becoming sectional, and that "his speeches would not go current now South of the Ohio River as they had formerly gone there." And he concluded: "Whatever may be the result of this ephemeral contest between Judge Douglas and myself I see the day rapidly approaching when his pill of sectionalism, which he has been thrusting down the throats of Republicans for years past, will be crowded down his own throat."

Douglas's satirical observations that Lincoln was seeking to appeal from the Supreme Court and pass a law to reverse the Dred Scott decision, did not deter him from freely continuing his criticisms of that deliverance. That it could not stand he very well knew and openly predicted. His most successful response to Douglas when the latter chose to carry the argument into this field was suggested by the curious circumstance that, while the Supreme Court had declared in favor of the constitutionality of a national bank, all the followers of Andrew Jackson and party platforms upon which Judge Douglas stood continued to declare that Congress was not competent to charter a bank. It was also an interesting point that while the Dred Scott decision expressly gave any citizen the right to carry his slaves with him into a territory of the United States by Judge Douglas's theory of popular sovereignty the people of that same territory by vote might drive the slave out of it again. The advantage therefore never leaned strongly to the Democratic side

when the discussion turned to the Dred Scott decision.

Douglas, it is often said, won to him hearers who were moved easily in response to impulse. For immediate results his shrewdness in taking hold of points and pressing them home with dexterity was an effective agency in the debates. His brilliant turns brought applause and cheers, but for a sense of their cleverness rather than because of any deep conviction they carried with them. After Lincoln's speeches it was observed that the people wore a look of seriousness. They were reflecting and discussing the questions that one of the clearest, most eloquent and most forcible of orators had brought before their minds. It was not their passion, their enthusiasm or their prejudice which had been aroused; he had touched instead their reason and their sense of right.

Wherever else he yielded he was unflinching in his demand that slavery should not be introduced into the territories. The hope of the country was in not teaching and propagating the evil on free soil later to be used in the construction of states. He sought to lead Douglas into some statement concerning the wrong of the institution. "I confess myself as belonging to that class in the country who contemplate slavery as a moral, social and political evil," said Lincoln at Galesburg, "having due regard for its actual existence amongst us and the difficulties of getting rid of it in any satisfactory way and to all the constitutional obligations which

have been thrown about it; but who nevertheless desire a policy that looks to the prevention of it as a wrong and looks hopefully to the time when as a wrong it may come to an end." Douglas declined the invitation to discuss the subject of right or wrong since by his theory this was a point upon which he had no right to act. Lincoln had unevasively declared, "I have no purpose either directly or indirectly to interfere with the institution of slavery in the states where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so and I have no inclination to do so." Nevertheless Douglas to the end of the campaign in the manner of the demagogue, which the historian would of necessity regard him were his record not alleviated by better deeds in other stages of his political career, continued to confuse the state with the territory. "Under the constitution of this Union each state has a right to do as it pleases on the subject of slavery," and "it is none of our business whether slavery exists in Missouri or not," were sentiments with which he aimed to capture the attention and confidence of his auditors.

"I care more for the great principle of self-government, the right of the people to rule than I do for all the negroes in Christendom," said Douglas at the last of the joint meetings. On the other side Lincoln declared that this "self-government" of Douglas's had been "nothing but a living, creeping lie from the time of its introduction till to-day." Thus the remarkable series of speeches ended. By

these principles, personalities and prejudices was this great contest characterized. In the debates it was conceded by impartial judges that Lincoln had gained the moral and intellectual advantage though his recognition and reward were delayed. The Republicans carried Illinois for their state ticket, but Douglas through the unfair apportionment secured the legislature, and in January, 1859, by a majority of eight votes was returned to the Senate for his third term, though his victory left at home a man upon whom the eyes of the people North and South had been irresistibly directed and for whom they were soon to find a task of vastly greater difficulty and more enduring consequence.

## CHAPTER V

### NOMINATED FOR THE PRESIDENCY

THE campaign having ended in Illinois and the result of the contest being known, Douglas started off to be absent for several weeks in the South, where he sought ineffectually to close the widening breach between the Northern and Southern wings of the Democratic party. He also spoke in several Northern states. Wherever he went he alluded to his recent tournament with Lincoln and sought to expose the dangers that lay only half hidden under the surfaces of the Republican creed. From the political managers of many states calls came for Lincoln whose assistance was needed in the work of organizing and strengthening the party for the impending contest for the presidency. He consented to make two speeches in the Ohio campaign of 1859. "The fight must go on," Mr. Lincoln wrote to Henry Asbury a fortnight after his defeat in the election in Illinois; "the cause of civil liberty must not be surrendered at the end of one or even one hundred defeats. No ingenuity can keep these antagonistic elements in harmony long. Another explosion will soon come."<sup>1</sup> He was entirely ready to bear his fair part of the burden in carrying on

<sup>1</sup> "Speeches," Vol. I, p. 521.

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the contest. He had agreed upon its importunity to pay \$250 to the state committee to meet its deficiencies during the campaign of 1858, and this in spite of the fact that he had contributed his own time and services to the neglect of private business and had borne all his "ordinary expenses" while traversing the state, being at the end of the canvass "absolutely without money for even household purposes."<sup>1</sup>

Lincoln's opening speech in Ohio was delivered at Columbus on September 16. It was his first appearance, he said by way of a preface to his address, before an audience in that state and it was a carefully presented and dignified political oration free of the personal vituperation which in the heat of conflict unavoidably found its way into the Illinois debates. He again took occasion to deny that he was in any manner sympathetic with negro suffrage, "a vile conception" which an Ohio newspaper in welcoming him to the state said with great untruth he had attempted to defend in the campaign of 1858, and proceeded to dissect Douglas's "copyright essay," an article lately contributed by him to *Harper's Magazine*. He had now come to regard Douglas as "the most dangerous enemy of liberty because the most insidious one." After quoting some favorite passages from Henry Clay he brought his address to an end with these stirring sentences: "I ask attention to the fact that in a preeminent degree these popular sovereigns are at this work ;

<sup>1</sup> "Speeches," Vol. I, p. 521.

blowing out the moral lights around us ; teaching that the negro is no longer a man, but a brute ; that the Declaration has nothing to do with him ; that he ranks with the crocodile and the reptile ; that man with body and soul is a matter of dollars and cents. I suggest to this portion of the Ohio Republicans, or Democrats, if there be any present, the serious consideration of this fact that there is now going on among you a steady process of debauching public opinion on this subject. With this, my friends, I bid you adieu."

In Cincinnati on the evening of the next day he spoke in an entirely different manner. It was the first time in his life, Mr. Lincoln began, that he had appeared "before an audience in so great a city as this." He addressed himself more particularly to the Kentuckians whom Douglas said he was engaged in setting on the people of Ohio and whom he desired to shoot at over the line to the destruction of the domestic peace. This idea gave much novelty and fascination to his address, and by the means which he adopted, his arguments, although in no sense new, were presented in another guise.

These two speeches were of unmistakable weight in the balance in Ohio in 1859. The intimacy of his relations with his audience and his good humor in the face of interruption, were among the most serviceable of his attributes as a political orator. No speaker trained upon the western stump before the war could be expected to be deficient in readiness to deal with friendly and unfriendly interjection.

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In Cincinnati, in referring to Douglas's crocodiles, he touched a chord somewhere in his audience and was harking back many years in his own life, when he explained that "we old Ohio River boatmen used to call them alligators." He frequently spoke to a man near him whom he singled out to illustrate some idea which he wished to expound with more than ordinary clearness. "O Lord!" ejaculated a hearer somewhere in the audience at Cincinnati, as he was making a point that stung the Democratic sensibilities. "That is my Kentuckian I am talking to now," Lincoln flashed back. "Speak to Ohio men and not to Kentuckians," commanded another man in the assemblage. "I beg permission," the orator responded, "to speak as I please." "Put on your specs," urged an auditor, as Lincoln took out of their case an old pair of spectacles to read an extract from one of Douglas's deliverances. "Yes, sir," he replied, "I am obliged to do so. I am no longer a young man." "Give us something beside Drid Scott," an Irishman interjected, after listening in patience for some time to an exposition of that famous Supreme Court decision. "Yes, no doubt you want to hear something that don't hurt," answered this inimitable man of the people.

Lincoln's was now a name on many lips in the West, quite within the bounds of possibility as the choice of the Republican party for the presidential nomination in 1860. His speeches in the debates with Douglas and the two addresses delivered in



Ohio of far greater permanent value, because free of the personalities of local politics, were printed together and sold in editions aggregating many thousands of copies. The men who have claimed the distinction of first bringing forward Mr. Lincoln as the Republican nominee, were as numerous as the offices which were to be filled with good Republicans when he arrived at Washington. The man who made him the choice of the Chicago convention of 1860 was Abraham Lincoln. For ten years he had committed no political mistakes, and while during much of this time he was chiefly distinguished as a retailer of trivial and inelegant anecdotes, he had great moments, as in 1854 and 1858, through which glimpses were received of the genius that burned for expression in a national cause. If Lincoln did not see the presidency at the end of the way he was now pursuing, he had distinct visions of senatorships and vice-presidencies. There was something now in life for him worth his living and striving for, and he was so regulating his political action with reference to the changing state of public opinion, with the aid of a group of his admiring friends, as to make himself inevitably the man of the hour when that hour should be at hand. To T. J. Pickett in April, 1859, who had suggested his candidacy, Lincoln wrote, "I must in candor say I do not think myself fit for the presidency." To others he was writing in the same way, and as modesty in public was no fault likely to jeopardize his chances in procuring the nomination, the people

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could make up their own minds whether a man who was able to conduct such a campaign for the senatorship as he had just conducted against Douglas, still combatting Lincoln's arguments with fervor in all parts of the country, who had been called into Ohio to aid the Republicans in their campaign, and who was soon to address one of the most intellectual of American audiences in Cooper Institute in New York city, was or was not fit to be President of the United States.

Before going into the East, Lincoln, in December, 1859, made a brief visit to Kansas to judge for himself of the condition of affairs in that territory, speaking to audiences in at least five different towns including Atchison and Leavenworth. For several months he had been considering the question of his acceptance of an invitation to appear before an audience in Brooklyn or New York. From Beecher's Plymouth Church came a suggestion that he would be paid \$200 for a lecture, were he willing to deliver it. Later the arrangements were put into the hands of a Young Men's Republican Club, which had projected a series of political speeches. F. P. Blair of Missouri and Cassius M. Clay of Kentucky had already spoken, and for the third lecture Lincoln was desired. Some misunderstanding arose as to the place in which the meeting was to be held, but there was none in the speaker's mind as to what would be expected of him, if he would acquit himself creditably in the greatest city of the country. He prepared himself with every care until he had

an address which, in the historical learning it displayed, surpassed anything yet attempted in his political career.

A vast audience of men and women assembled in Cooper Institute on the night of February 27, 1860, to listen to his discourse, "a larger assemblage of the intellect and mental culture" of the city, said the *Tribune* in reporting the event the next morning, than any orator had addressed since the days of Webster and Clay. William Cullen Bryant presided. David Dudley Field conducted the speaker to the platform. Ex-Governor King, Horace Greeley and many other men eminent in the anti-slavery movement occupied prominent positions in the assemblage when this tall Springfield lawyer, who had bearded Douglas in the great senatorial canvass, rose to expound the issues to the people on the Atlantic seaboard. Some may have had their secret misgivings as his angular figure, clad in a suit of black, the cloth much mussed and wrinkled by its travels in a small valise, stepped to the front of the platform, but the impression was only momentary. In the address Lincoln inserted no West country anecdotes. His figures were lofty. He made no effort to be florid or to provoke laughter, and the effect was to dispel every thought of anything but an earnest, high-minded, scholarly man, bred to the knowledge of the republic's history and political institutions, who had mastered the problem that tormented the nation and made the conflict of sections seem not far away. Nearly one half of the address was de-

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voted to an interesting and successful effort to show with accurate citation of chapter and verse that a majority of the men who composed the convention that framed the Constitution of the United States in Philadelphia in 1787, were distinctly committed against the proposition of the day that the Federal government lacked the power to control slavery in the territories. Another portion was addressed to the Southern people in a kindly manner, but in that bold and dauntless spirit which was a characteristic quality when he felt himself in the right. He ended with an appeal to his fellow Republicans. The total effect of the Cooper Institute speech was a settling of a consciousness over the East, that in the West had appeared an anti-slavery leader of presidential proportions. The New York newspapers reported the address in full and Bryant, speaking for the *Evening Post*, instead of complaining at its length expressed the wish that he had more material so interesting with which to fill the columns of his journal. The *Tribune*, as it explained, omitted only "the tones, the gestures, the kindling eye and the mirth-provoking look." These had defied the reporter's skill.

While in New York Lincoln attended the services in Beecher's church and alone and incognito looked in upon a mission Sunday-school where he was invited to speak to the children who, whenever he made a movement to stop cried out, "Go on! Oh, do go on!" As he rose to depart, the superintendent, asking the name of the visitor, was surprised to

hear the answer, "Abraham Lincoln of Illinois."<sup>1</sup> He made the acquaintance of George Bancroft in a bookshop and shortly turned his face toward New England whither he was going to see his son Robert, then at Phillips Exeter Academy, preparing for Harvard College. On the way, since elections were pending in Connecticut, Rhode Island and New Hampshire, he spoke at Hartford to an immense audience in the city hall, at New Haven, Meriden, Woonsocket, Bridgeport, Concord and Manchester. While the biographers of Lincoln who eulogize, sometimes at the expense of truth, have often striven to make it appear that this tour increased his political repute, a careful record of the addresses in Connecticut compel the opinion that he again, for some cause inexplicable in his character, fell away from his higher standards. Much inelegant anecdote was introduced into these discourses in New England, where it was the least likely to be well received, and at Hartford he was even induced to take up sides in a strike then in progress in the local shoe factories, in which illustration was again given of the curious lack of knowledge that was always characteristic of him in the discussion of the simplest economic questions.<sup>2</sup>

He returned to Illinois a presidential candidate in every sense of that word, although he had made no open avowal of his intention to secure the nomination, if that should be within his power, a move-

<sup>1</sup> J. G. Holland, "Life of Abraham Lincoln," p. 213.

<sup>2</sup> Lincoln, "Speeches," Vol. I, p. 625.

ment which he was sufficiently shrewd to know might serve to bring only confusion to his hopes. Before leaving Springfield for the East he had confessed to the chairman of the Republican state committee that his disappointment would be severe if he did not secure the Illinois delegates, and upon his return in March he wrote in spite of the long political struggle with its attendant "pecuniary loss" to at least one admirer in Kansas, offering \$100 to bear his traveling expenses to the national convention.<sup>1</sup> He was convinced that the tariff question ought not to be injected into the canvass, but was clear in the view that he should not obtrude himself into public notoriety by any statement in any sense upon any subject.

He was as vigilant as he was ambitious; as shrewd as he was eager for a nomination which it was fully understood would involve a contest with the Republican leaders in several states and, more difficult than all, with William H. Seward, supported as he was by one of the most astute of all American political managers, Thurlow Weed. Several men in Lincoln's immediate group of friends and advocates had at the right time secured formal permission for the use of his name as a presidential candidate, and when the Republican State Convention met at Decatur on the 9th and 10th of May, it was well understood that Illinois would have a "favorite son" at Chicago, and that he would be no other than Abraham Lincoln.

<sup>1</sup> "Speeches," Vol. I, pp. 631, 633.

When Lincoln entered the hall there were wild demonstrations of enthusiasm. The cheering was prolonged for several minutes, reaching its height when John Hanks and another old farmer were announced, each carrying upright a fence rail which he and Lincoln had split from the walnut logs thirty years before. Accompanying them was a banner upon which was inscribed, "Abraham Lincoln, the rail candidate for the presidency in 1860. Two rails from a lot of 3,000 made in 1830, by John Hanks and Abe Lincoln, whose father was the first pioneer of Macon County." Decatur being in Macon County, and near the place at which Thomas Lincoln settled when he came into Illinois from Indiana, Hanks, with or without prearrangement with the Republican managers, brought the rails to town to inject an object into the campaign which was strongly typical of the issue "between labor free and labor slave ; between democracy and aristocracy."<sup>1</sup> It directed attention in an unmistakable way to Lincoln's humble youth and the facilities which are at the poorest man's hand under free institutions for advancement to places of the greatest eminence in the nation. The occasion invited a speech from the candidate. He could not say whether these were the particular rails which he had split, but he did know those which he and Hanks had made were "good, big, honest rails." Since the text had been suggested he dwelt a little of necessity upon the poverty of his early life ; but

<sup>1</sup> Herndon, p. 460.

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never a demagogue who conceived that his fitness for the presidency, if fit he were, came from the fact that at one time in his career he had ploughed the soil or built fences, it is certain he had taken no part in the movement to bring forward the rail as the emblem of his canvass which it instantly became.

At Decatur men were appointed as delegates to the convention at Chicago who were ardently devoted to him personally. They were also of sufficient ability and experience in political management successfully to direct the movement for his nomination without which all the loyalty in the world could have been of little avail. The list was made out with care by Lincoln's friends, who retired from the hall for the purpose, while lying on the grass in a neighboring grove, it having first been submitted for the approval of their chief. The Republican national convention met a week later on the 16th of May. By that time events which were distinctly reflected in the Charleston convention had effected a division in the Democratic party. Separate Northern and Southern candidates were now inevitable. If secession, resistance and civil war were not now definitely foreshadowed, it was tolerably clear that the candidate who should be nominated in Chicago for president would be elected, should wisdom be displayed in his choice, and that he, upon taking the office, would be confronted by the greatest problem which had ever confronted a chief magistrate of the republic.



Each state in the Union which maintained a Republican organization contributed its quota of delegates, and while Lincoln himself had earlier professed some unconcern as to the place at which the nominating body should convene, it was to his unquestioned advantage that the meeting would be held upon friendly ground. The sympathies of the newspapers were expressed in the inscriptions upon their banners hung prominently over the street: "For President, Abraham Lincoln." The old rails came up from Decatur with the delegates sworn to the splitter of them for the head of the national ticket, and illuminated by tapers and decorated with flowers by lady admirers, they were a kind of Republican shrine so long as the convention lasted, at the hotel where the Illinois delegates made their headquarters. The delegates met in a great temporary frame structure called the "Wigwam," specially erected for their use. It would accommodate probably ten thousand persons, less than the number which presented themselves for admission to its doors as active participants in the deliberations or as spectators and *claqueurs* for the rival candidates.

That William H. Seward, the polished philosopher of the anti-slavery movement, the first and last choice of New York and other states, would be his party's nominee for president was the confident expectation of that gentleman and the well disciplined body of men who came to Chicago to bring about that object. He had been governor of New

York and was then serving his second term in the United States Senate. He was well known and generally trusted and admired. Like Lincoln he was of Whig antecedents but unlike Lincoln he had been in the public eye for so many years and upon so many issues that he had unavoidably created antagonisms which exerted an influence against him greater than he had calculated. His clans and cohorts came to Chicago in so much confidence and with so uncompromising a determination to carry back the prize, that instead of conciliating opposition elements, the antipathies were increased. That Ohio would vote for Chase, Pennsylvania for Cameron, Missouri for Bates and New Jersey for Dayton, was very well understood and that their delegates would turn, either to Seward as the East thought or to Lincoln as the West thought, after the first ballot, was also a matter very clear to discerning men. They were the two real candidates before the convention, as events disclosed, when the assembly selected its officers, heard the inevitable speeches upon the issues, adopted the platform, and upon the third day proceeded to the work of balloting for a candidate for president.

Seward remained at his home in Auburn while Lincoln contented himself at Springfield. When he was asked if he intended to go to Chicago the latter replied: "I am a little too much of a candidate to go and not quite enough of a candidate to stay away; but upon the whole I believe I will not go." He tossed ball in his garden to allay the fever of

anxiety as the convention took up the work which was of such decisive importance to him, to the party and to the nation.

From the time the delegates reached the city until the nomination was made, the retinues of the rival candidates practiced not a little amusing chicanery which has by this time become very characteristic of political conventions in the United States. Mr. Seward's followers, as has been said, regarded the selection of their matchless leader as in some senses a foregone conclusion. They occupied the streets with their bands of music and marching men, jostled the Illinoisians in the hotels and packed the convention hall with their *claque*. Lincoln's friends aimed to retort in kind. One evening William D. Kelley of Pennsylvania spoke for hours against time, until the great crowd in the hall should in sleepy exhaustion leave their seats and go to their homes in spite of loud demands that he should sit down and give the Seward men an opportunity to be heard.<sup>1</sup> Kelley was as voluble as he was obdurate and thus Thurlow Weed's men were outwitted at one point.

The Lincoln leaders gained their next advantage in a "still hunt" for men accomplished in yelling and whooping, which it was conceived might become a very important factor in the work of securing the nomination. On the first day of the convention it was discovered that the Seward forces were distributed over the hall, with a view to pro-

<sup>1</sup> "Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln," p. 255.

ducing ungodly clamor and noise whenever the name of their leader was pronounced on the platform. Therefore Lincoln's friends put their heads together, and having knowledge of a Chicago man whose voice by reputation could "drown the roar of Lake Michigan in its wildest fury," could be heard indeed it was said "on a calm day across that lake," he was directed to report to the Republican headquarters for immediate duty. There must be another. One of the Lincoln men knew a Dr. Ames whose voice was widely famed for its remarkable power. He, although a Democrat and not a resident of Chicago, was telegraphed for and reaching the city on the first train, was taken into the committee's employ. Ames and his colleague were instructed to organize secretly from such material as could be found in the city, two bodies of men to cheer and "hollow." The groups were seated upon opposite sides of the "Wigwam," and at a signal, the flaunting of a handkerchief in the hands of a Lincoln man on the platform, were to emit a shout that would raise the roof from the hall. The signals were frequently given and the response was so lusty and disconcerting that the tide of enthusiasm was turned toward Lincoln unmistakably. Ames it is related became so much addicted to shouting for Lincoln that he was unable to stop, joined the Republican party and later received his reward in the shape of a country postmastership.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Arnold, p. 167.

On the third day of the convention Seward's men made a tactical mistake, and paraded the streets with their banners and bands which played "O! isn't he a darling," and other appropriate refrains, at a time when Lincoln's followers were shrewdly filling the seats in the "Wigwam." The New Yorkers arrived only to find all the desirable places occupied.

When the moment came for the presentation of names of candidates to be nominated by the convention for president of the United States, William M. Evarts, who led the New York delegation, rose in behalf of Mr. Seward. Norman B. Judd of Illinois nominated Abraham Lincoln, and leaders of the delegations from other states who came instructed to cast their votes for favorite candidates rapidly followed, with Dayton, Chase, Cameron, Bates, Collamer and McLean. Indiana seconded Lincoln's and Michigan Seward's nomination. The cheering was tumultuous for both the leading candidates. Even Illinois' well directed *clagues* found it a troublesome task to drown the cheering and applause which Seward's name evoked. The waving of hats and handkerchiefs, stamping, clapping and screaming have been described by many witnesses of this thrilling scene, but the balance in noise seems to have rested on the side of the Lincoln men after the "concentrated shriek," with which they concluded their historic demonstration.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Halstead, "Conventions of 1860," p. 145.

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On the first ballot Seward had 173½ and Lincoln 102 votes, Cameron leading the minor candidates with fifty and one-half votes. Seward had been supported by the entire New York delegation with seventy votes, and received all or practically all the votes of Massachusetts, Michigan, Wisconsin, California and Minnesota. He fell far short of what his managers had hoped for him, especially in the New England States, which contributed as many as nineteen votes to Lincoln's total on the first ballot, to swell the support undividedly accorded the western candidate in Illinois and Indiana.

Those who desired Seward's defeat, saw in this initial test of the strength of the leaders the certain triumph of Lincoln. He was the one man upon whom the opposition might unite, and amid deafening shouts for a second ballot the delegates who had thrown away upon "favorite sons," rushed to the Illinoisian. Pennsylvania turned to Lincoln almost solidly. Ohio, which was expected to join Seward's standards, never cast a vote for him upon this or any other ballot. Lincoln now had fourteen votes from that state and thirty-six from New England. The result of the second ballot was—Seward 184½, and Lincoln 181, the first gaining eleven votes while the latter had won seventy-nine.

Upon the third ballot, which proceeded amid breathless excitement in all parts of the hall, Lincoln captured eight votes in New Jersey, nine in Maryland, and fifteen that he did not have before in Ohio, increasing his poll from all sources to

231½, while Seward's stood at 180. Only one and one-half votes were needed for a choice. The contest was at an end. Four more Ohio votes came to Lincoln, the change being announced by the leader of the state's delegation, a teller waved his tally sheet in the air and a cannon boomed the news to the crowd in the street, to the farmers at work in outlying fields, and to the sailors before the mast on the lake. There was general changing of votes; delegation after delegation strove to put itself on record on the victorious side. Mr. Evarts in a voice that but imperfectly concealed the disappointment felt at that moment by all of Mr. Seward's friends, remarkable for their devotion and loyalty, moved to make the nomination unanimous.

It was a bitter reverse for that, as it considered itself perfect organization, the New York "machine," and the telegraph carried an unwelcome message to Mr. Seward as he awaited the result of the contest at his home at Auburn. One who sat at the same table with Thurlow Weed while the third ballot was being taken says he was so visibly affected that he was obliged to press his fingers to his eyelids to keep back the tears. One New York delegate more philosophic and humorous than the rest, General Nye, afterward a senator from Nevada, suggested that the "Sucker Boys" should go to Albany and give Weed a few lessons in politics. But compliments from the Seward side were for the time being sparingly bestowed.<sup>1</sup> The East

<sup>1</sup> Arnold, p. 168.

generally doubted the expediency of the nomination, and college graduates and men of culture and refinement, representative of the dignity as well as the conscience of the older states, could ill conceal their distrust of a candidate who at once came to be designated as the Illinois Rail Splitter. He was not well known on the Atlantic coast. The tour of the Eastern states which Lincoln had made in the interest of Zachary Taylor in 1848, had been the cause of his meeting Governor Seward and Thurlow Weed, but the latter, when reminded of the circumstance, did not recall it in 1860.<sup>1</sup> That campaign, therefore, cannot have created a very deep impression upon the public mind. It is true that he had spoken to national audiences in the debates with Douglas in 1858, but it was after all a very faint echo of the contest which penetrated the East. Even the metropolitan journals of that day received but an insignificant amount of news by the "magnetic telegraph," and little space was at the disposal of the editor for speeches, save those by local political leaders. The tour that led him to New York and New England in the early months of 1860, had resulted in the excellent Cooper Institute speech and several addresses in New England of doubtful value to his reputation. As well received as he was upon his visit in February, the number of people who heard his voice was not large, and while many more became acquainted with him by a reading of the reports of his meetings in the news-

<sup>1</sup> Weed, "Autobiography," Vol. I, p. 603.



papers, this audience in proportion to the whole number of men who went to make up the electorate in the North Atlantic and New England states, was plainly very small. The impression prevailed in wide circles that a man who had been a rail splitter, and whose qualifications were uncertain, had been nominated as a candidate for president in preference to a leader of tried and unquestioned ability and worth, known for his polished manners and scholarly attainments.

Nevertheless the East, particularly Pennsylvania, then a pivotal state, holding that place of supreme importance in deciding presidential elections, since occupied by New York, had joined hands with the West in giving Lincoln the nomination. Seward was the author of too many utterances which made him appear unavailable at the time when the Republican party hoped to elect its candidates, if it should act wisely. The fact that Lincoln was earnestly supported from the first by the delegates from the border states indicates that he was regarded as a conservative man on the Southern question. It was thought that those who professed a great dread of negro equality, one of the strongest factors in the campaign among voters of the unthinking sort, a very numerous body as is known by every student of democracies, would prefer Lincoln to Seward. A New England candidate would have been wholly out of the question. Such a nomination would have implied a sectional purpose from the beginning which would have been

impolitic to the last degree. New York was strongly tinged with the hated taint of New England Abolitionism in the view of the South, and while there was no expectation of carrying the slave holding states for the Republican ticket, it was necessary to have the most careful regard which was at all consistent with the propagation of Republican principles for the popular sentiment in states still by no means ready to assume a radical attitude on the great issue dividing the two portions of the Union. A candidate to stand for the growing, changing West, such as Lincoln, was a pressing need of the Republicans of 1860, in whose veins coursed any of the prescience of opportunism.

Lincoln's strength lay in his very obscurity. What his opinions were in so far as they had not been expressed in the Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858, and the Ohio speeches of 1859, which were circulated in pamphlet form might be conjectured, but they could not be definitely known. Seward, on the other hand, had been speaking for many years in Congress, and no campaign passed that he was not actively employed upon the stump in a state whose newspapers were more efficient than those of any other part of the country. If a "rail candidate" were not likely to awaken the enthusiasm of New York or New England, those states could be depended upon to support the nominee, as against a Democrat, whoever he might be. The states it was important to secure in 1860 were New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Indiana and Illinois, all of

which had given their electoral votes to Buchanan in 1856. There were great bodies of men upon the frontiers, and indeed in every part of the country, whose lives had been humbly begun and were humbly led. The fence rail was with them a better symbol than a college parchment and the knowledge of the world's polished literatures and philosophies. The American electorate since John Adams' day had not proven itself very friendly in a test case to aristocrats, and in Lincoln was found a democrat more truly democratic than any candidate who in this campaign would carry that attractive name.

The "cotton barons," the "cavalier race" and other titles commonly applied to the Democrats of the South, who wished to make their influence perpetually predominant in giving character to their party, were not suggestive of democracy. Nor did the arrogant, lordly air of Douglas to be the leader of the northern Democrats in the canvass against Lincoln, speak eloquently of that simplicity and rough disrespect of pretense and form which were the boast of Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson. A senatorial candidate who was received in Ottawa for the first joint debate with Lincoln in 1858, amid such ceremonies as these, could not very strongly impress the people with a sense of his democracy. "Judge Douglas, the great champion and the invincible defender of the rights, liberties and institutions of a free people," writes a witness in reporting this debate, "was met at the city of Peru,

sixteen miles distant, by the committee in an elegant carriage, drawn by four splendid horses, and brought to Ottawa. Four miles out he was met by a delegation composed of several hundreds bearing flags and banners, and escorted into the city amid the booming of cannon, the shouts of thousands and the strains of martial music. He came like some great deliverer, some mighty champion who had covered himself with imperishable laurels and saved a nation from ruin.”<sup>1</sup> There was not among the candidates of 1860 one whom any American desirous of thinking himself a Democrat in deed as well as in theory could so consistently support as the man nominated on May 18th in the Wigwam in Chicago.

On the evening of that day after having chosen Hannibal Hamlin, of Maine, as the candidate for Vice-President, a Republican of Democratic antecedents, in recognition of the fact that the new party was not rising solely in the ashes of Whiggery, the delegates departed upon the trains for their separate homes. “At every station where there was a village, until after two o’clock,” says Mr. Halstead, “there were tar barrels burning, drums beating, boys carrying rails, and guns, great and small, banging away. The weary passengers were allowed no rest, but plagued by the thundering of the cannon, the clamor of drums, the glare of bonfires and the whooping of boys who were delighted with the idea of a candidate for the presidency who

<sup>1</sup> Correspondence of *Philadelphia Press*, August 26, 1858.

thirty years before split rails on the Sangamon River.”<sup>1</sup>

On the following day Mr. Ashmun, the chairman of the convention, with a delegate from each state designated as a committee of the convention officially to notify Mr. Lincoln of his nomination, repaired to Springfield. The nominee had received the news over the telegraph wires at the editorial offices of a Springfield journal, and the people of the city had fired salutes, cheered him and shaken his hands as they pressed into his little home, so that he had reason to be well persuaded that he was the choice of the convention before Mr. Ashmun's deputation had arrived. It came in a single passenger coach by extra train and reached the state capital on a Saturday evening, to find upon approaching the cottage one of Lincoln's sons perched on a gatepost. Inside the candidate awaited them with a pitcher of water, from which they were invited to regale themselves after the journey. He formally accepted the nomination in a little statement he had prepared for the occasion, “deeply and even painfully sensible of the great responsibility which is inseparable from this high honor,—a responsibility which I could almost wish,” he declared with suitable modesty, “had fallen upon some one of the far more eminent men and experienced statesmen whose distinguished names were before the convention.”

<sup>1</sup> Halstead, “Conventions of 1860,” p. 154.

## CHAPTER VI

### ON TO WASHINGTON

VERY shrewdly studying the political situation Lincoln now became the silent Sphinx. The plot thickened all about him and the future grew more unclear as parties were rended and candidates multiplied. The Democrats were divided into two great camps on the slavery question. The portion of the party in the South for which Douglas's doctrines were too moderate had a presidential candidate of its own in John C. Breckinridge, of Kentucky, upon whom was to fall the mantle of James Buchanan and the resigning administration, and the redoubtable senator from Illinois was left with only the North and the border states from which to secure those majorities that were necessary to him, if he were to leap into the presidential office and test the virtue of his theories as to the salvation of the Union by popular sovereignty with indifference to the right or wrong of slavery. There was besides the Constitutional Union party which would ignore the question of slavery, nominating John Bell, of Tennessee, and Edward Everett, of Massachusetts, for president and vice-president, a combination not inaptly called the "Kangaroo Ticket," because its hind legs were the longest, a compliment pointedly aimed at Mr. Everett. The Republican

platform adopted at Chicago had been constructed by conservative men, with a full understanding of the declarations which might or might not be politically expedient. The essential reference to the slavery question was a denunciation of the effort to impose the Lecompton constitution upon Kansas and the assertion of the principle that no power, not even Congress itself, could establish and legalize slavery in the United States' territories. To this doctrine Lincoln subscribed, and to all appeals which reached him constantly at Springfield for a fuller statement of his opinions upon this and other issues his secretary, John G. Nicolay, forwarded politely worded declinations. He refused upon his own conviction of what was to his personal interest, and the best interest of the cause for which he stood, a view in which he was enforced by the counsel of his wisest friends. He resolved that during the campaign he would notice no calumny, correct no impression, no matter how false, and enlarge upon no previous utterance. When he did write it was briefly, the notes being usually marked "private" or "confidential" or both. Nearly always, however, except it be in the case of the attempt put forth to make him out a "Know Nothing," at which he was manifestly deeply stung, and either confirmation or denial would have meant offense to large bodies of voters, even his confidential letters counseled those who desired information as to his position in the canvass to consult the Republican platform or study his published speeches. "Those who will

not read or heed what I have already publicly said," he wrote to Mr. Speer in October, "would not read or heed a repetition of it. 'If they hear not Moses and the prophets neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.'"<sup>1</sup>

In July he wrote to Hannibal Hamlin, with whose name his own during the canvass was being so closely linked: "It appears to me that you and I ought to be acquainted, and accordingly I write this as a sort of introduction of myself to you. You first entered the Senate during the single term I was a member of the House of Representatives, but I have no recollection that we were introduced. I shall be pleased to receive a line from you." During the campaign several notes passed between Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Hamlin, but at no time did the Republican candidate for President transgress the very wise rule for the guidance of his personal action to forbear for these five months from making public declarations. While not unmindful of the progress of affairs he consulted with few of the managers, and did not allow himself to be drawn into the conflict. He had removed his papers from the small office which he occupied with Mr. Hurd to the governor's room in the State House, freely placed at his disposal, and here he directed such correspondence as he was willing to conduct and received multitudes of people from all parts of the Union who visited Springfield to press his hand and look into his face.

<sup>1</sup> "Speeches," Vol. I, p. 652.



As the campaign advanced the more certain seemed the victory. The opposition was hopelessly divided. There were open threats of secession in the South among the elements which were arrayed under the Breckinridge banner. Douglas had entered the canvass in person, speaking North and South and waging such a campaign as no presidential candidate has waged either before or since. He was dealing blows right and left against Breckinridge on the one hand and Lincoln on the other. In his own success was the only safety for the Union. But his contest, valiantly as he was directing it, it was plain could avail nothing against the Republicans. He had become as Lincoln predicted in 1858 the leader of a sectional party.

The North had reached the point when it would temporize no longer with slavery and Southern territorial pretensions, and would accept no more compromises. Lincoln was looked upon as the embodiment of this conviction. The Abolitionists might in his silence regard him as one of them, the moderates who wished no violation done to the rights of the slaveholder in slave states, had his solemn declaration that he shared their opinions and the conservatives on the borders of the South were led to believe that the election of any man who was a native of Kentucky could not bring the country irreparable harm, and that he was no great "nigger lover" after all. In all places where men used axes to split rails, his name touched a respon-

sive chord in the American character without regard to his or anybody's view of the slavery question, and thousands upon thousands marched up and down the land in "Wide Awake" processions on horseback and on foot, arousing enthusiasm for the Republican candidate. The "Wide Awakes," the Republican vigilants, seem to have sprung from a club formed at Hartford in February, 1860,<sup>1</sup> during the Connecticut campaign in which Lincoln participated after the Cooper Institute speech. A small body of men in glazed caps and oilcloth capes, each carrying a pole upon his shoulder, at the end of which dangled a lighted petroleum can that distributed oil and soot regardlessly over the enthusiastic campaigner, escorted him to his hotel and with this club as a model thousands of societies were formed, the young men of each village enlisting to travel hither and thither for service at political meetings. At the larger towns as many as 30,000 marching men would congregate and file through the streets with torches and fence rails, and in not a few cases when they invaded Democratic strongholds, they were hooted and stoned by ruffians which added zest to the campaign, reaching at many places late in the year a very excited stage.

The October states had given in their verdict, and the success of the Republican ticket in Pennsylvania and Indiana afforded absolute assurance

<sup>1</sup> Nicolay and Hay, Vol. II, p. 285.

of Lincoln's election in November. In several states, as in New York and New Jersey, the Douglas and Bell factions made an effort to fuse and divide the electoral votes, the movement availing nothing except to give Douglas three votes in New Jersey which with nine from Missouri made up his entire complement. Bell carried Virginia, Tennessee and Kentucky securing thirty-nine electors. Breckinridge's total, seventy-two votes, was secured in Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Texas. Lincoln was the choice of the people in all the free states except New Jersey, where the fusionists left him four electors, a total of 180 against 123 for the combined opposition, or a majority of fifty-seven in the electoral college.

The South had met the fate which its farther sighted leaders had long anticipated ; it had been beaten in its race with the North through the colonization of free settlers in the West and Northwest. Breaking with their allies in the North, who long gave them an artificial ascendancy, on the question of acquiring new slave territory and extending the domain in which negroes might be held as property, the Southern states were now ready to make a stand in their last ditch, secession,—asserting by armed force, if need be, their constitutional right to leave the Union they had joined as sovereign governments nearly seventy-five years before, and establish a separate confederacy.

Mr. Lincoln continued to enjoin upon himself the silence which became a man in his position in the interval which elapsed after his election in November till his inauguration in the ensuing March. The position in which he was placed was aggravating to the limit of endurance, as he saw events multiply to magnify the tasks of his administration and threaten the nation with prolonged civil strife. "I have not kept silence since the presidential election from any party wantonness or from any indifference to the anxiety that pervades the minds of men about the aspect of the political affairs of this country," he said in February.<sup>1</sup> "I have kept silence for the reason that I supposed it was peculiarly proper that I should do so until the time came when, according to the custom of the country, I could speak officially."

His election was the signal for the coming to Springfield of politicians and place seekers of infinite variety in their possible usefulness to him, in their claims upon the rewards which a victorious party has to bestow, and in their demands upon his time, patience and courtesy. Thurlow Weed soon appeared in the interest of Mr. Seward and New York state, and remained in the Illinois capital in conference with the president-elect for several days. There were arrangements entered into at Chicago by Judge David Davis, as Mr. Lincoln's personal representative at the national

<sup>1</sup> From his address in New York City, "Speeches," Vol. I, p. 687.

convention, although the latter declined to recognize their binding force, by which he had secured the votes of the delegates from Pennsylvania and other states. There were urgent demands and the most vigorous protests against Simon Cameron's appointment to the cabinet and Lincoln, after notifying him of his selection for the Treasury or War portfolio, repented of his action only finally to change his mind again and bring the Pennsylvania leader into his immediate group of political counselors.

It was his clearly stated object in the constitution of his cabinet to choose his advisers from among those leaders who were of best report in their respective sections as indicated by the esteem in which they were held in the Chicago convention. Thus it was that places were found for Seward, Chase and Bates. He wished to have the various sections properly represented. Thus it was that Welles was chosen for New England and Montgomery Blair was taken from Maryland as a compliment to the South, after seriously discussing the availability of leaders from more Southern states including Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia.

As his labors progressed in the choice of his leading advisers, the distribution of many varieties of smaller spoil and the preparation of his inaugural address in a dingy back room of a small building opposite the State House in the presence only of a copy of the constitution of the United States, Webster's "Reply to Hayne," Andrew Jackson's

“Nullification Proclamation” and Henry Clay’s famous speech on the compromises of 1850,<sup>1</sup> the situation grew steadily worse in the country at large. The doctrine that a state possessed the right to nullify a national law, and if need be secede from the Union to which it had given its adherence, when in its own good time separate existence would seem to be to its advantage, was no novelty in American politics. Whether or not this right existed was an open question in the minds of many sincere men.

It is idle to cry “treason” and call men “traitors” for endeavoring to exercise power which upon study, conviction and traditional understanding they believe to be just and constitutional. Affairs had come to this unhappy pass in this country in 1860 because of the great doubts felt in the South and shared by many in the North as to the proper view of the constitution, because too of the most natural disinclination to begin what proved to be, as not a few foresaw, a costly and destructive fratricidal war. Mr. Buchanan, who as “Old Buck” and “Uncle Jimmy,” was spoken of only patronizingly, if not in execration, for his policies, which were plainly a confession of ignorance of what he could and should do rather than of senility and moral turpitude, was still in the president’s chair. It is often said that by following the illustrious example of Andrew Jackson, he could have stamped out every vestige of secession.

<sup>1</sup> Herndon, p. 478.

That he could have attempted this is reasonably clear, but the mood of the South had undergone great change since Jackson's time, and coming through either Buchanan or Lincoln an expressed intention to hold the cotton states longer in the Union against their will, would have inevitably led to armed resistance. Whether Mr. Buchanan's hope to avert such a calamity was a great error of policy as it is generally regarded in the North, or not, he at that time voiced the sentiments of many who would have made any sacrifice for the peace and harmony of the two sections. In the cabinet the members, as a matter of course, selected their sides in the approaching contest and a "conspiracy" was entered into, it is said, by the Secretary of War, Floyd, of Virginia, the Secretary of the Treasury, Howell Cobb, of Georgia and the Secretary of the Interior Jacob Thompson, of Mississippi, to disrupt the government.

Lewis Cass, nearly eighty years of age, Mr. Buchanan's Secretary of State, at length retired from the cabinet rather than be responsible for acts which were rapidly bringing things to a dangerous crisis. The army had been so placed with reference to any contemplated defense of the Southern forts, it was charged of Secretary Floyd, that he was convicted by public opinion in the North of high treason. But of what did the proud army of the United States consist? Little more than 15,000 men in a country of 31,000,000. The navy through Secretary Toucey, of Connecticut, who was reckoned

to be in league with his Southern associates in the cabinet, had been scattered to the four quarters of the earth when they should have been kept at hand for use upon the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. Of seventy-two war vessels in the American service but two mustering twenty-seven guns were at home at this critical hour. It must be remembered, however, that warships do not usually cruise in the harbors and upon the shores of the country whose flag they bear. Mr. Sumner and others charged that the Treasury was plundered so that it could not meet even a small draft. Military stores and other material had been transferred from Northern to Southern states, with a view to weakening the Republicans should they resort to force. In short, no effort was spared to cripple the North in the pending contest, and far-reaching injury was done to the Union cause by secret machination and treachery.

It is plain that much of the cause for this reproach will disappear if regard is had for the Southern point of view. If any member of the cabinet believed sincerely that states had joined the Union to remain only so long as whim and advantage should dictate, it would be violative of every known rule of human nature to expect them to prepare the government at Washington for a civil war. They contended that a state had a constitutional right to secede peacefully at will. Then what need of strengthening the other states for resistance? Their action implied no war. When



the time was ripe they would quietly withdraw from the Union, appoint commissioners to adjust their claims with the Union, as South Carolina was preparing to do, in reference to custom-houses, forts, military stores and federal posts. Once it is granted that any part of the people of the nation held the view that the Union was a confederacy rather than a federation of states inseparably joined, vastly less odium must by the verdict of history attach to the action of the Southern members of Mr. Buchanan's cabinet. That president's message when Congress met in December was not notably Unionist or disunionist, although erring greatly on the side of the South. The document had been submitted for the approval of the very diverse elements of which his cabinet was composed. In the view of the London *Times* the paper completely dissipated the idea that the inhabitants of the American states any longer "constituted one people" and the course of events in the South, particularly in South Carolina, tended to confirm this opinion in widening circles of men.

If the South could justly aver that many of the founders of the republic were advocates of the idea that a state might leave the Union when that Union became irksome to it, and that New England itself on an historic occasion contemplated cutting loose from the rest of the nation, the North had the advantage of the argument, when witnesses were sought among the Fathers on the plain moral issue of slavery. The Republicans were not in

doubt, as Lincoln had expressed the thought, that the organizers of the government had accepted slavery only as an evil which was ultimately to be extinguished. Washington wrote to Robert Morris in 1786 that "there is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do to see some plan adopted for the abolition of slavery." His disgust with the system was so great, he declared, that he did not intend to acquire another slave by purchase. Benjamin Franklin, in 1789, denounced the system as "an atrocious debasement of human nature." Of the struggle to maintain it, Jefferson said that "the Almighty has no attribute which can take sides with us in such a contest," while Henry Laurens; of South Carolina, said that he "abhorred" it, George Mason, of Virginia, that it was an "infernal traffic," which had originated "in the avarice of British merchants"; and Patrick Henry, whom Byron called our "forest-born Demosthenes," that "it is as repugnant to humanity as it is inconsistent with the Bible and destructive to liberty."

The bitterness of feeling which had been growing more and more intense for a decade is almost past our later understanding. With Garrison and the Abolitionists at one extreme and Yancey and such secession hotspurs at the other, invective and epithet were hurled defiantly across the Mason and Dixon line. On the floor of Congress, slaveholders were gravely denounced for "bartering their own children," "dealing in the image of God," "buying and selling the souls of men," "making merchan-

dise of the Holy Ghost," etc. The South replied in kind, in such terms as "Abolitionists," "contemptible fanatics," "black Republican disunionists," "nigger lovers," and "Lincoln's hirelings," a name applied generally during the war to Union soldiers to indicate that they were not gentlemen and gentlemen's sons like the Southerners, fighting for their hearths and firesides, but German and Irish immigrants employed often as substitutes in the purlieus of Boston, Philadelphia and New York. The loyalty of the Southern women which has not been surpassed by anything ever recorded of the women of France, must be held to have been largely due to the well grounded impression that the Republicans were advocates of a civilization which would result eventually in the predominance in America of a mulatto race. Lincoln, because of his unfortunate personal appearance, was openly likened to a gorilla, and flowing in Mr. Hamlin's veins, it was popularly supposed there was a strong current of African blood. The Southern leaders disputed the charge that they were disunionists. It was the North they asserted, with President Buchanan as their witness, which by aggression and intolerable disregard for Southern rights and interests, had brought the country to its present very unhappy pass.

Beneath the brutal speech and vulgar thought which discreditably characterized men prominent in leadership upon both sides, there was some intelligent appreciation here and there of the compli-

cated magnitude of the underlying issues. There were thousands and tens of thousands in the South who had not contemplated actual secession, and who, when the time came for that radical step, indulged in deep heart searchings as to the wisdom of so bold a course. Hesitating to follow the leadership of men who rashly urged this leap into the dark, they at length acceded in a rather half-hearted spirit, that months of war changed to stubborn determination. South Carolina is "too small for a republic and too large for a lunatic asylum," wittily observed one of the not too willing converts to the secession cause. The boys in the streets, when the new Confederate banner was unfurled with its seven stars instead of the thirty-four they had been accustomed to see, sang somewhat derisively,—

"Flag of our country can it be  
That is all that's left of thee?"

But that the North misunderstood the situation, every true Southron was inwardly convinced. There were in his view two methods, one or other of which would be adopted to accomplish the extinction of slavery. First there was the Garrisonian-Giddings-Lovejoy-John Brown method which contemplated the sending of emissaries among the slaves to incite them to murder and insurrection. The threats of the Abolitionists, said one writer, were uttered "with the keen appetite for Southern blood which fiends only could feel." Secondly,

there was the "Black Republican" method of Lincoln and Seward, the "peaceful and constitutional method" through the election of sectional candidates by sectional parties. It meant the prohibition of slavery through amendment of the Constitution, which could be effected in perhaps ten years, the annihilation of the capital invested in four million negro slaves, the paralysis of Southern agriculture, particularly cotton culture, the enforced idleness of Southern lands, and the closing of manufactories of cotton yarns and cloths in many distant countries. The pecuniary loss in the slaves alone, reckoning them to have an average value of \$600 each, would, it was computed, reach an approximate total of \$2,500,000,000, and contingent losses would raise the total to \$9,000,000,000. Famine and bread riots in England, multitudes of slaves released to pillage the Southern states, which would be inevitably followed by race wars and greater horrors than those disgracing the French Revolution, flitted through the minds of the planters. What if slavery had in it elements of wrong? It was a firmly established institution and an inseparable feature of the Southern economic system, and could not be destroyed without the destruction of greater things. Emancipation with all that would follow in its train, would be a crime against the slave as well as the master.

The Southern people vigorously denied that their slaves were cruelly treated, except in the unusual case of a bad master, which argued little against

the general system. It was quite unreasonable to suppose that an owner would neglect to care for his property, since it would yield him a decreased return if it were not kept in good physical condition. The negroes were an inferior race of people, but as slaves in America they had been brought infinitely nearer the civilization which would qualify them for citizenship than they could have been by centuries of existence as wild men in Africa.

Mrs. Trescott, the wife of President Buchanan's Assistant Secretary of State, spoke for many Southern women when she told William H. Russell upon his visit to their Sea Island plantation in South Carolina, in 1861: "When people talk of my having so many slaves, I always tell them it is the slaves who own me. Morning, noon and night I am obliged to look after them, to doctor them and attend to them in every way." The people of the South were not disinclined to think that they were entitled to credit on St. Peter's balance sheet for feeding and clothing so many millions of creatures, and approached the subject in that spirit displayed to-day by great employers of free labor, who in the payment of wages sometimes regard themselves rather too arrogantly as benefactors of their kind.

"Inhabiting a slave state from my earliest youth," wrote John Lewis Peyton, "I have no hesitation in declaring that the Southern negroes were the least-worked, the best-fed, clothed and housed of any laboring population I have ever seen in any quarter of the globe, and I have no hesitation in

saying were the happiest and most contented class of people in any walk of life I have ever known.”<sup>1</sup>

Lincoln's election was scarcely announced when the people of South Carolina, the home of Calhoun and Nullification, resolved to make good their threat to leave the Union. With public meetings, excited oratory, bonfires, a display of palmetto flags and the organization of volunteer militia companies, whose members called themselves “Lions,” “Tigers” and “Scorpions,” ordinances of secession were passed, and the state in December asserted that it was again an independent republic, free of Federal control. This course had not been adopted without an exchange of views with the governors and political leaders of other Southern states, and that South Carolina was not to stand alone was soon made manifest. She was followed within two months by Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas, in the order named—all the cotton states. Some thirty Southern members of Congress united in a manifesto to their constituents asserting that the Republicans were “resolute in the purpose to grant nothing that will or ought to satisfy the South.” They therefore recommended secession and the organization of an independent Southern confederacy. Senators and representatives were leaving Congress with mock heroic valedictory ceremonies, as their respective states voted themselves out of the Union, and the disruption of the government went on apace.

<sup>1</sup> Peyton, “American Crisis,” Vol. I, p. 272.

Still there were suggestions of compromise, repeated as Edward Everett said with a "melancholy assiduity." A committee of thirteen had been appointed in the Senate and a committee of thirty-three in the House to devise some means of averting the impending disaster, and early in February a Peace Convention assembled in Washington with old ex-President Tyler as its presiding officer. Not even Clay, had he come back to life, could avail to pacify the sections any longer. Forty years had elapsed since the compromise over Missouri; forty weeks, perhaps forty days would not pass before armed blows would be struck to decide the issue which was now far past the stage of amicable adjustment. The same day the Peace Conference met at Washington a convention of Southern delegates assembled at Montgomery, Ala., to adopt a constitution, elect officers and enact laws for the new confederacy of the seceded states.

Meantime, while many were bent upon regarding Lincoln as an Abolitionist, his inauguration day was rapidly approaching and he had yet made no statement which would indicate an intention to lead a destructive assault upon any of the cherished rights of the South. He had declared at a meeting in Springfield, called to celebrate his election, that "all American citizens are brothers of a common country and should dwell together in the bonds of fraternal feeling." He reassured a Kentucky Democrat by telling him that he would administer the fugitive slave law as honestly and fairly as



Mr. Buchanan.<sup>1</sup> At one point he was firm and unwilling to make any concessions by way of conciliation, and that was upon the territorial question. "Entertain no proposition for a compromise in regard to the extension of slavery," he wrote to Congressman Kellogg.<sup>2</sup> "The instant you do they have us under again; all our labor is lost and sooner or later must be done over." Neither by popular sovereignty nor by any other device should hope be cherished of him or his administration regarding the establishment of slavery in ground not already cumbered with it. He wrote to Alexander H. Stephens "for your own eye only," and asked: "Do the people of the South really entertain fears that a Republican administration would directly or indirectly interfere with the slaves or with them about the slaves? If they do, I wish to assure you as once a friend, and still I hope not an enemy, that there is no cause for such fears. The South would be in no more danger in this respect than it was in the days of Washington."<sup>3</sup> What he would do with seceding states was not written in any of his speeches, as his arguments with Douglas had never led him into that field of discussion selected by Webster and Calhoun. To Thurlow Weed, however, who represented the incoming administration in all practical ways in the East he expressed his opinion, for public use if it should be expedient,

<sup>1</sup> "Reminiscences of Lincoln," p. 317.

<sup>2</sup> Lincoln, "Speeches," Vol. I, p. 657.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 661.

“that no state can in any way get out of the Union without the consent of the others; and that it is the duty of the president and other government functionaries to run the machine as it is.”<sup>1</sup>

With a deep sense of the difficulty of his place he spoke so guardedly and so infrequently that by no chance could the course of events in the South be directly attributed to any statement of his existing opinions or future designs. As the month of February advanced and inauguration day drew nigh Mr. Lincoln's friends and managers completed the arrangements for his journey to Washington, concerning which not a few public and private misgivings were expressed. Many states and cities contended for the distinction of entertaining the new president on his way to the national capital. Many invitations were of necessity declined but a tour sufficiently lengthy and circuitous was mapped out. The trip was to begin on February 11th. He requested his partner Mr. Herndon to let hang undisturbed the old sign board on which his name so long had stood. “Give our clients to understand,” he added, “that the election of a president makes no change in the firm of Lincoln and Herndon. If I live I'm coming back some time and then we'll go right on practicing law as if nothing had ever happened.” For the grand tour he was provided with special trains whose schedules of travel were very carefully arranged. They were preceded by

<sup>1</sup> “Speeches,” Vol. I, p. 660.

<sup>2</sup> Herndon, p. 484.

pilot engines to foil the machinations of conspirators and efficient railway men left no detail unconsidered in their undertaking to transport him safely to the seat of government. In his coach were not only the members of his family and his private secretaries, but also a number of his trusted Illinois friends, including David Davis, Norman B. Judd and Ward Hill Lamon. A farewell to the people of Springfield was said from the rear platform to the crowd which had surrounded the train to witness its departure. A garbled report of the speech was sent far and wide over the country. Lincoln was made to say that he could not face the duties of his great office except with the knowledge that he was the object of the prayers of his old neighbors, which led many to predict that he would dismally fail, if success were hanging upon so slight a thread.

From Springfield he passed to Indianapolis where he spoke to the legislature of Indiana, then to Cincinnati where he made two speeches, one to a large assemblage presided over by the mayor and the other to a numerous body of Germans. At Columbus he spoke to the legislature of Ohio, and from the train addressed a crowd at Steubenville. A speech longer than any other delivered upon the tour, devoted not very happily to the tariff question, which he had never studied, was offered at Pittsburg. From that city he turned back into Ohio and visited Cleveland, thereupon proceeding to Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Utica, Albany,

Troy, Poughkeepsie, Hudson, Peekskill, New York, Trenton, Philadelphia and Harrisburg. At all these places in the order named he delivered longer or shorter addresses for which in several cases he did not dismount from the train. At Albany, Trenton and Harrisburg, he appeared before the legislatures of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. In Philadelphia he assisted at ceremonies attending the raising of a flag over Independence Hall.

A more difficult task than the making of speeches at such a time in the existing state of public affairs with the eyes of the nation fixed upon him cannot easily be imagined, and Lincoln for the most part acquitted himself creditably, without yielding to boastful threat or a statement of his policies prematurely. His reply to the address of welcome at Indianapolis was one of the happiest of his utterances on the tour. In the course of this speech he said: "I wish you to remember now and forever that it is your business and not mine; that if the Union of these states and the liberties of this people shall be lost it is but little to any one man of fifty two years of age, but a great deal to thirty millions of people who inhabit these United States, and to their posterity in all coming time. It is your business to rise up and preserve the Union and liberty for yourselves and not for me. I appeal to you again to constantly bear in mind that not with politicians, not with presidents, not with office seekers but with you is the question: Shall

the Union and shall the liberties of this country be preserved to the latest generations ? ”

In his address to the Assembly of New Jersey Mr. Lincoln awakened great enthusiasm in his audience, his utterances being interrupted by loud and prolonged cheering. He said : “The man does not live who is more devoted to peace than I am, none who would do more to preserve it ; but it may be necessary to put the foot down firmly. And if I do my duty and do right you will sustain me, will you not ? Received as I am by a legislature, the majority of whom do not agree with me in political sentiments I trust that I may have their assistance in piloting the ship of state through this voyage surrounded by perils as it is, for if it should suffer wreck now there will be no pilot ever needed for another voyage.”

How the plans for Lincoln’s tour from Harrisburg to Washington were suddenly changed upon the advice of Pinkerton, the detective, and his men who had been employed to ferret out a conspiracy for the president’s assassination in Baltimore, is a story that has often been told. Instead of proceeding to Washington directly from the capital of Pennsylvania, Mr. Lincoln was induced to return to Philadelphia, in which city, accompanied by only two men, the detective and his friend Mr. Lamon of gigantic frame, who was to be his faithful body-guard throughout the war as marshal for the District of Columbia, he boarded a sleeping coach attached to a regular train and reached Washington

incognito before daylight on the morning of February 24th, just thirteen days after setting out from Springfield. As the trio came from the train they were met by E. B. Washburne who was to have had the companionship at the station of Mr. Seward, but the latter did not appear until after they had reached Willard's Hotel. Thus it was that Mr. Lincoln entered Washington while all the world still believed that he had not yet passed through Baltimore. The deception involved in the change of program was not to Mr. Lincoln's liking,<sup>1</sup> but it seems to have been a wise precaution which may perhaps have been the means of preserving him to the nation that, severed and torn by divergent purposes, it was his immediate task to use his powerful offices to reunite.

<sup>1</sup> Lamon, "Recollections of Lincoln," p. 46.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR

FOR many years Washington had been the cynosure of the young eyes of brides and grooms, and not many honeymoons were allowed to pass over the heads of the happy youth of America, without a journey to the capital of their country. The city to the untraveled had a very grand appearance. The time had gone to return no more when a president-elect could ride up for his inauguration on horseback, and dismounting, tie his steed to a fence-paling. No more could the English poet sing of

“The famed metropolis where fancy sees  
Squares in morasses, obelisks in trees.”

But it is vain to assert that it was in any sense a capital which could be very favorably compared with the capitals of the great nations of Europe. Edward Dicey, who came here as the correspondent of a London newspaper during the war spoke of “the dark, ill-lit, ill-paved streets” of Washington, and George Augustus Sala, who visited the city on a similar mission, said it was a “shinplaster in bricks and mortar with a delusive frontispiece of marble.” With the capitol as its only important

building it conveyed "a perplexed impression that the British Museum had suddenly migrated to the centre of an exhausted brickfield where rubbish may be shot," a city which doubtless one day would be "uproariously splendid but which at present isn't anything. It is in the District of Columbia and the State of the Future."

To an American such utterances were thoroughly treasonable, but in truth it was to such a city that Lincoln had come to reside at a hotel until he should be inaugurated in a few days as the president of a Union from which seven states had seceded, to be followed in a little while in all likelihood by a half dozen more, to form altogether a Southern slaveholding confederacy, armed *cap-à-pie* to resist any attempt to call them back to their former allegiance.

Mr. Lincoln's coming was the sign for a number of social interchanges which occupied the few days to elapse before he should take the oath of office. He made the customary calls upon the outgoing president and his Cabinet, to the two Houses of Congress and to the Supreme Court. President Buchanan and his ministers officially returned his visits and many members of the Senate, the House, and the famous Peace Conference whose sessions were then in progress, and individuals drawn to the city to be present at the turn of the tide of government were received in the parlors of his apartments. On inauguration day Mr. Buchanan called for him in an open carriage and they were together driven without untoward incident through the as-



sembled crowds to the capitol, where upon the east portico the oath was to be administered. In front were assembled literally acres of people who had come to witness the ceremonies, many of them in simple curiosity and with little friendliness, for the Washington of this time was distinctly Southern in its sympathies. Mr. Lincoln was attired in a spick-and-span new suit of black. He wore a high silk hat, carried a gold-headed cane and exhibited a bristling and unbecoming growth of black whiskers which he seemed to think would add to the dignity of his appearance. Cheers greeted him as he mounted the platform. He was introduced by his warm personal friend Senator Edward D. Baker of Oregon. As he rose to deliver his address, which had been carefully prepared at Springfield and revised, though in very unimportant respects, by William H. Seward since coming to Washington, he rather awkwardly sought a place for his cane which was finally deposited on the rough boards beneath the table, and his hat which Senator Douglas stepped forward to take and held graciously throughout the proceedings.

The address was in temper as conciliatory as any that could have been honestly made by a man of Mr. Lincoln's inflexible principles. It was marked by no rash threat against the South. He pledged the Southern people under his administration the equal protection of the laws, specifically disclaiming any design to violate the rights of the states on the subject of slavery. As to the formidable attempt

in progress to effect a disruption of the Union, Mr. Lincoln plainly declared that it rested upon a theory at variance with any defensible view of the American government. The Union he said was perpetual and "no state upon its own mere motion" can lawfully get out of it. "To the extent of my ability," he added, "I shall take care, as the constitution expressly enjoins upon me, that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the states." In performing what he considered to be "only a simple duty," he promised that there should be no bloodshed or violence "unless it be forced upon the national authority." Property and places belonging to the government would be occupied and held.

He saw and stated the true cause of the rupture between the sections, an issue which was later so curiously masked in England and among many classes at home. "One section of our country believes slavery is right and ought to be extended," Mr. Lincoln observed, "while the other believes it is wrong and ought not to be extended. This is the only substantial dispute." The commissioners from the South who had come to Washington to secure a division of property and the peaceful secession of their states were directly addressed when Mr. Lincoln said: "The chief magistrate derives all his authority from the people and they have conferred none upon him to fix terms for the separation of the states. The people themselves can do this if they choose; but the executive as such has nothing

to do with it. His duty is to administer the present government, as it came to his hands and to transmit it, unimpaired by him, to his successor." His conclusion, which was suggested by Mr. Seward, but is wholly the product of his own mind in all that pertains to the beauty and poetry of its form, has become one of the most celebrated passages in his writings :

"I am loth to close. We are not enemies but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battle-field and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

Chief Justice Taney, the author of the Dred Scott decision, rose and administered the oath. Douglas, who repealed the Missouri Compromise and precipitated the troubles in Kansas which led to the formation of the Republican party, returned Mr. Lincoln's hat, and Buchanan, bowed with his years, the chief malefactor on the slavery side in the view of large sections of men in the North, under whose patronizing eye secessionist conspirators had developed their plans to full fruition throughout months of drifting—awful drifting—accompanied him back to the White House. After the American manner Mr. Lincoln was now the undisputed proprietor of the mansion in which Mr. Buchanan had

made his home for four years, and that gentleman, returning to the ranks of citizenship from which he had sprung, wishing his successor, with half guilty irony, a peaceful and happy administration, departed the scenes of power to find repose upon his Pennsylvania estate. It was now President Lincoln; his policies were announced and publicly known, in so far as it was necessary or expedient in the present state of affairs for the public to know them. His words of conciliation were all that in his understanding of the character of the Union and the nature of his office under it, he could offer and the issue was in the hands of the Southern states.

While most men were well persuaded that the South could not be recovered without war, very few had an adequate notion of the magnitude of the struggle upon which the nation was about to enter. No honeyed phrases or appeals to reason, memory or the prosier sentiments of expediency would now avail to win back the South, but the knowledge that a firm hand was at last at the helm of affairs exerted a useful influence to solidify the opposite section. The North hesitated to believe that the South seriously intended to leave the Union, even after several states had formally voted to secede. There was wide-spread doubt whether the Federal government had the right to coerce a state, and if it had that right, whether it might not much better decline to exercise it, especially since force, as it appeared, must be applied against a large group of

states, indeed, an entire section of the Union. If they were determined in their course, would it not be merciful to let them go in peace, even though still denying the right of secession? To shed the blood of brother white men, for three-quarters of a century closely bound together under a common nationality, to many minds seemed a vastly greater evil than the division of the republic into slave and free states.

These sentiments, which were in the ascendant during the Buchanan administration, Lincoln came to dispel, though it is a result which was not quickly, or ever indeed while the war lasted, thoroughly accomplished, a fact that served at every point to complicate his task. Horace Greeley had been asserting in the New York *Tribune* that it was not conformable to the genius of republican institutions to coerce a state. The whole tone of New York city was far less strongly Unionist than is sometimes believed.<sup>1</sup> In prominent newspapers only mobs were competent to instil anything like salutary Union views. Business men had already felt the damaging effect of a division of the sections, and in a sordid spirit of self-interest which often possesses a commercial community, were willing to grant much to avoid the shock of civil war. They sold their goods in the South and received Southern merchandise in return. Even New England, which procured the material for its cotton spinneries in the Gulf states, was casting doubts upon the right or

<sup>1</sup> Russell, "My Diary North and South," pp. 20, 355.

expediency of arming to restore the Southern states to their affiliations. General Scott at the head of the army, one of the few officers of the government high in station, who had been accounted quite faithful to the Union interest, had in a weak moment brought up the question whether the "wayward sisters" might not better be allowed to "depart in peace" and both Mr. Chase<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Seward, who had passionate concern that the South should be conciliated, wavered when the time was at hand to turn the guns of one section against the people of the other.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps there were few men anywhere who did not in some parts of their being quail at the thought of a great fratricidal conflict, or would not to-day, if we should picture to ourselves a repetition of an attempt at disunion of such dimensions, hesitate to meet the military issues which a resolute policy would certainly invite.

While Mr. Lincoln had begun the construction of his cabinet immediately after his election was assured by the news which reached him in the telegraph office in Springfield on the night of November 6, there were some places not yet filled when he arrived in Washington. It was a very difficult task in the state of the country, as he realized full well, to bring to his council men who would be truly representative of all the sections, interests and shades of factional opinion which could be made available for his use in consolidating Union feeling

<sup>1</sup> Russell, "Diary," p. 355.

<sup>2</sup> Welles, "Lincoln and Seward."

for the test of strength between North and South, now only too imminent. Mr. Seward was marked out for the State Department on many accounts. Salmon P. Chase of Ohio, earlier a Democrat, widely respected for his honesty and integrity, was brought into the cabinet to be Secretary of the Treasury. Simon Cameron was appointed to the War Department against the strongest protests, and only after the president-elect convinced himself that on balance he would offend more by refusing than by acceding to the request, for such a recognition of the Pennsylvania party leader. Gideon Welles of Connecticut was invited to be the representative for New England as Secretary of the Navy, although Seward said he did not know the stem of a boat from its stern, while Caleb B. Smith of Indiana as Secretary of the Interior, Edward Bates of Missouri as Attorney-General, and Montgomery Blair of Maryland as Postmaster-General, chosen at the last moment as an additional pledge of the administration's just purposes toward the Democrats and its sympathy, consistent with the preservation of the Union with the Southern people, completed the group of seven of which the cabinet then consisted. There were four Democrats, it was observed, and only three Whigs in his council room, to which Mr. Lincoln responded that he was himself an old-line Whig and he would be on duty "to make the parties even."

It was a motley group which fell to pieces almost before it was firmly set upon its feet. The tariff

men in Pennsylvania distrusted Chase because of his supposed proclivities in favor of free trade, and Seward himself, about whom all the tasks and responsibilities of government, in the view of many people, would cluster and revolve, disliked the combination so cordially that he announced his intention of getting out of it. He declared that he would not serve with Mr. Chase, whereupon Mr. Lincoln with that determination which characterized him at critical moments, said he would appoint Mr. Dayton of New Jersey to be Secretary of State, and send Mr. Seward to England.<sup>1</sup> To the president's request that his action should be reconsidered, Mr. Seward acceded,<sup>2</sup> and thus a ministry was constituted as unstable as any that has marked the history of the cabinet system in France, held together only by a sense of necessity and the presiding genius of him who was its ever firm, tactful and forgiving chief.

The new president almost immediately turned his attention to the relief of the Southern forts, particularly those overlooking Charleston, where the temper of the people was such that the sight of a United States flag was a signal for some unfriendly act or insolent remark. Again and again was the proposal made to reenforce these posts during the closing months of the Buchanan administration, and Mr. Lincoln was at once confronted with the same problem. Major Anderson in command of the lit-

<sup>1</sup> Lamon's "Recollections."

<sup>2</sup> Nicolay and Hay, Vol. III, pp. 370, 371.



tle garrison at Fort Sumter was isolated, and it was calculated that his supply of provisions would shortly be exhausted when he must capitulate and turn over another piece of Federal property to the Confederacy. The first time the question was brought before the new cabinet, the members were quite generally in favor of an abandonment of the fort. Another course, some of Mr. Lincoln's leading advisers declared, would immediately provoke a war which by unchanging pursuit of a policy of conciliation might still be averted.

The president was incessantly vigilant. He despatched to Charleston his friend Lamon, who had accompanied him to Washington from Illinois as an unofficial delegate to spy the ground and discover, if he could, what was the real state of feeling in South Carolina and how it fared with Anderson in the fort. With Lamon went S. A. Hurlbut of Illinois, but of Charleston birth, to visit his friends and relations in South Carolina, similarly delegated to report his observations, especially as to the strength of the Union party in the Palmetto State. Captain Fox who had a plan to "run the batteries" and relieve Sumter also made a hurried visit of inspection. All the emissaries from Yankeedom were accorded certain courtesies by the officers of the government of South Carolina, who were bent upon avoiding any act which would have the appearance, in their own view at least, of striking the first blow.

Lamon in spite of his great size was nearly

hanged by a mob of hotspurs in slouch hats with their trousers tucked in their boots,—profane, spitting majors and brigadiers by self-appointment, who were everywhere taking control of the streets, hotels, public buildings and railway stations in the South.<sup>1</sup> His report upon his return to Washington did little to reassure the president. Although new to his office, unacquainted with his ministers and they unacquainted with him, the necessities of the case resulted in a rapid formulation of his policies. Mr. Lincoln had never sacrificed anything of his determination to do what he could to protect Federal property, and he was at no time unmindful of Major Anderson's situation. At its next meeting the sentiment of the cabinet had undergone material change, and expeditions early in April were organized secretly, under direction of the president, to repair hastily to the Southern coast, one to the relief of Fort Sumter, the other to Fort Pickens, guarding the entrance to Pensacola harbor which was also in distress.

Before Captain Fox was enabled to reach Sumter, because of a storm and an unhappy conflict of orders, although some of his vessels were in a position outside the bar to signal to Major Anderson in the fort, the crisis was reached. Choosing to regard Fox's earlier visit as a violation of the agreement under which he was allowed safe passage to and from the garrison, and acting upon orders from the central Confederate agents at Montgomery, who

<sup>1</sup> Lamon, "Reminiscences," and Russell, "Diary."

knew perfectly of the measures taken for the fort's relief, General Beauregard, after duly informing its commander of his intentions if evacuation were not immediately made, began the attack at daylight on the 12th of April, 1861. Long offended by the presence of a Union flag in their harbor, the Charlestonians left their beds in glee and crowded the wharves and shipping to witness the early morning assault. Anderson and his little handful of men, reduced to pork and water, replied to the fire throughout Friday, the 12th, and were able to resume on the following day, though without men enough to handle but a small part of the whole number of guns or an adequate supply of cartridges. The wooden buildings were set on fire by red-hot shot, so that the men were nearly stifled with smoke and in danger of the explosion of the powder magazine. At one o'clock of the afternoon of the second day the flagstaff was shattered and the falling of the banner was taken to be a signal of surrender leading to the historic charge of that picturesque secessionist fire-eater, Senator Wigfall, in a boat with a handkerchief tied to a sword as a flag of truce. By Saturday evening the terms of capitulation were arranged, and on Sunday, April 14th, Anderson and his men, transferred to one of the United States relief boats, were sailing northward, the heroes of the first engagement of the war.

Although the South Carolina gunners had fired upon the *Star of the West*, a merchant steamer which in January had made the attempt to enter

Charleston harbor and bring relief to the beleaguered garrison, and a schooner bearing the American flag loaded with ice for Savannah, which by chance had come into range in March, suspected of a like mission, was forced to beat a hasty retreat by shots from the Confederate batteries, it needed the carefully planned assault upon Fort Sumter to arouse the North to a sense of the reality of the approaching conflict. The bombardment of a United States fort, the attack upon the American flag prolonged throughout two days, even though mollified by polite offers to the garrison of surgeons and fire engines, filled the people as by an electric charge with patriotic ardor.

The issue was now at hand in military form. Lincoln, while Sumter was still under fire, told a committee of Virginians that he would use every effort to hold government property within the boundaries of the seceded states, retake posts that had already been or should in future be seized,—in short to the extent of his ability he would “repel force by force.” The news of the fort’s capitulation was the signal for a call for 75,000 militiamen for three months’ service, and for an extra session of Congress, to meet on the 4th of July. Through newspapers, public meetings and every variety of agency employed in translating public opinion, expression was given to the fixed determination of the Northern people to defend the Union with their lives. Each village green became a mustering ground for companies of volunteers, and even the

children were carrying toy muskets and tin swords in the playgrounds adjoining Northern school-houses. Senator Douglas visited the White House and pledged his influence on the side of the Union, sending out over his signature a statement which had almost the power of command to his great following. This act assisted greatly in defining the position of the Democrats, lowered the hopes of the secessionists, many of whom saw a great Southern party in the North just as Seward discerned the traces of a formidable Union party in the opposite section, and early gave practical guarantee that the war was not to be by Republicans for Republicans, but by all loyal Unionists for the preservation of the Union, however their ballots may have been cast at the polls in 1860.

The requisitions for troops went out to the governors of many states, which it was clearly understood would not respond to the call. From the border slave states replies came promptly, indicating that in the impending struggle their sympathy would be with South Carolina and the other "cotton republics." Jefferson Davis issued a proclamation on April 17th inviting applications for letters of marque and reprisal by which he hoped to fit out fleets of privateers to ravage the commerce of the Northern states, and Lincoln two days later replied with a proclamation blockading the Southern coasts and declaring that privateers when captured would be treated as pirates. Regarding military activity in the North as a movement to

“subdue” and “subjugate” the South, action in the words of the governor of Missouri which was “inhuman and diabolical,” requiring the Southern people, as the governor of Arkansas observed, to “defend to the last extremity their honor, lives and property against Northern mendacity and usurpation,” the seven pioneers in secession were rapidly joined by other states.

Virginia, a vast empire stretching from the seaboard to the Ohio line, left the Union on April 17th, although the secessionists were not able to deliver the entire state to the Confederacy. Its western mountain counties disavowed the action taken at Richmond and were formed into the separate loyal state of West Virginia. While Virginia was not concerned in the growth of the cotton plant, and therefore found no great profit in the ownership and management of slaves, she had become the breeding ground for negroes. J. E. Cairnes, the English economist, in his passages with Mr. McHenry on this subject, computed from reliable data that Virginia had bred and exported to the cotton states between the years 1840 and 1850 no less than 100,000 slaves, which at \$500 per head would have yielded her \$50,000,000. The trade was of great importance to the people, and was of weighty influence in deciding the grave question of their sympathies in the pending struggle.

Tennessee, Arkansas and North Carolina followed Virginia out of the Union in May and the Confederacy might now claim to be a nation of con-

tiguous area and diversified industries, with an important seacoast, great rivers, and a considerable population. Its inhabitants numbered about nine millions, of which it is true nearly four millions were slaves. Inferior as the negroes were accounted to be, they were to prove themselves invaluable allies while their masters were under arms on distant military fields, and by their enforced service vastly contributed to the prolongation of the war. There yet remained the border slave states of Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland and Delaware, which were the scene of machination and counter-machination by Unionists and disunionists, but which nominally continued their loyal adhesion to the Union. Sending regiments to both armies, their populations divided in allegiance even as to neighborhoods and families, they were, in the early stages of the war at least, in the most unhappy situation. Besought to secede they yet resisted the movement and strove to maintain a position of neutrality.

The accession of the four interior slave states, especially Virginia, greatly strengthened the resolution as it increased the material resources of the Confederate leaders. They determined to establish their capital at Richmond in close proximity to Washington. The area in secession was thus brought up to the very doors of the Federal capital, and President Lincoln, looking from the White House windows, could behold a Confederate flag flying at a staff upon a hotel six miles down the

river in Alexandria. This was the standard, in removing which young Ellsworth, the Zouave, earlier a law student in Lincoln's office in Springfield, and his companion upon several notable public occasions, lost his life in a dramatic way. There was good cause to fear for the safety of Washington itself, and the Southern people's failure to take advantage of the opportunity to seize the defenseless city must be ascribed to their own unreadiness for the war and their indisposition to conduct it offensively. They seem still to have deceived themselves in the thought that they would be allowed to go peaceably, at any rate until they were informed of the unparalleled activity in the North in response to President Lincoln's call for troops and the actual arrival in Baltimore of regiments on their way to the Federal capital.

It was firmly believed by many Southern men that Maryland would follow Virginia, in which case Washington would have been secured and very likely all the Western and Northern states, except New England.<sup>1</sup> "There was a ferocity in the Southern mind toward New England," W. H. Russell observed while on his tour of the newly formed Confederacy in the interest of the *London Times*, "which exceeds belief." Every effort was put forth to capture Maryland for the Confederacy, and the first regiment of troops sent South in answer to the Federal requisition, the Sixth Massachusetts, was so severely abused by mobs when it reached

<sup>1</sup> Peyton, "American Crisis," Vol. I, p. 60.



Baltimore, that it was necessary for some time in future to take soldiers into Washington by way of Annapolis. "Maryland, my Maryland" became the battle song of the Confederacy. She was urged to

" Avenge the patriotic gore  
That flecked the streets of Baltimore  
And be the battle queen of yore,  
Maryland, my Maryland."

She would certainly rouse with these words in her ears :

" Lo ! There surges forth a shriek  
From hill to hill, from creek to creek  
Potomac calls to Chesapeake,  
Maryland, my Maryland.

" She is not dead, nor deaf, nor dumb.  
Huzza ! she spurns the Northern scum ;  
She breathes, she burns. She'll come, she'll come,  
Maryland, my Maryland."

But Maryland did not come, though her Northern allegiance was for long not too secure. Her choice was hanging in the balance finally to become in the hands of her Union governor, Hicks, a buffer of the greatest value to the city of Washington, as soon as the North's military arrangements were complete and the battle line was fixed on the south side of the Potomac River.

There were many critical times in Washington before the war was done, when the capitol, the

executive mansion and all the symbols of the government's authority were in imminent risk of passing into control of the South, the city becoming the seat of the Confederate instead of the Federal administration. The first of these seasons of anxiety and trial, of which Lincoln was to experience very many, confronted him early in his administration. Sumter had surrendered. Virginia had seceded. Maryland was in danger of following her out of the Union. Federal property within sight of Washington was confiscated. Government officials from justices of the Supreme Court and officers in the army of the rank of Robert E. Lee, down to clerks in department bureaus, were resigning in great numbers. Northern troops hurrying South, were unable to get transportation through the state of Maryland. General Scott, who was generally known as "Old Fuss and Feathers," was openly distrusted by members of the cabinet, as for example by Mr. Blair, and he was so aged and gouty, that if a battle were fought he could go to the scene only in a light buggy, for he could no longer bestride a horse. The telegraph wires were cut, and Washington was as effectually isolated as though it were an island in an uncharted sea. A committee from Baltimore came to ask Lincoln to send no more troops through Maryland, and to "recognize the independence of the Southern states." His reply was characteristic of the man who had already made himself the great substantial bulwark of the Union. To the suggestion that he should violate

his oath and surrender the government to conspirators, he answered :

“There is no Washington in that ; no Jackson in that—there is no manhood or honor in that. I have no desire to invade the South ; but I must have troops to defend this capital. Geographically it lies surrounded by the soil of Maryland, and mathematically the necessity exists that they should come over her territory. Our men are not moles and can’t dig under the earth ; they are not birds and can’t fly through the air. . . . Go home and tell your people that if they will not attack us we will not attack them ; but if they do attack us, we will return it, and that severely.”

Still Washington was helpless ; still no troops came with anxiety increasing every hour. Once on the afternoon of April 23d, Lincoln, in his executive offices, thinking himself alone, after pacing up and down the room for a long time in gloomy meditation, was overheard to moan as he looked down the Potomac by which route the soldiers were expected, “Why don’t they come ? Why don’t they come ?”<sup>1</sup> Again he complained with the irony that often characterized his speech : “I begin to believe that there is no North.” The New York regiment, the famous Seventh, in which the city felt a pardonable pride, was on its way, and finally it came. With its banners flying, its men marching in orderly ranks behind its military band, one of the best musical organizations in the

<sup>1</sup> Nicolay and Hay, Vol. IV, p. 152.

country, it paraded through the avenues of the Federal capital, the people throwing open their windows and flocking out upon the pavements to welcome the deliverers, soon with the regiments which quickly followed them to be the instruments to give the city an aspect of hope and patriotism.

Meanwhile the Southern leaders were improvising a plan of campaign should Lincoln undertake an "invasion" of their "sacred soil." They were drilling and organizing their volunteers. "What are Old Abe and Seward going to do?" was the question on many lips when Mr. Russell visited the South. No one was destined to wait a very long time for the reply to this inquiry. At two o'clock on the morning of May 24th, lighted on their way by a brilliant full moon and preceded by cavalry, the Union forces which had flocked to Washington from the various Northern states, moved across the Potomac and without molestation from the Virginia militia, began the construction of that system of fortifications and earthworks upon Arlington Heights which throughout the war served as an important protection for the capital. The outposts were pushed forward several miles into the heart of the Old Dominion, and that sacrilegious act, the entry of one state's troops upon the soil of another state with hostile intent which was declared to be inimical to the genius of republican institutions, was soon successfully performed. The Richmond *Examiner* called the Federals as they advanced, "the band of thieves, robbers and assassins

in the pay of Abraham Lincoln commonly known as the United States Army.” The grand seigneurs of the South, although there were but about 400,000 slaveholders in a white Southern population of five millions and a half, consistently to the end of the war spoke of the “Yankees” as religious fanatics and foreign mercenaries, and confidently asserted that the North had had its principles so corrupted by the rotting virus of commercial ambition, that the republic under its direction could no longer be a refuge for the down-trodden and the oppressed. General Beauregard, in command of the Confederate Army in June, 1861, declared in a pronouncement which greatly incensed the North that, “All rules of civilized warfare are abandoned and the United States proclaim by their acts if not by their banners that their war-cry is ‘Beauty and Booty.’” Such words were used before General Butler had yet entered New Orleans, or Sherman had devastated his way to the sea.

Indeed, practically nothing of any kind had yet been effected by the Federal army and General Scott proposed no action until the next winter when he would blockade the ports and seize posts on the Mississippi, enveloping the South and crushing its breath out by his widely ridiculed “Anaconda Scheme.” The public mind would have none of this. The South must be given its lesson at once. The Union must be restored to-day,—this week. The three months’ men would soon be going home and their services must be

utilized in a grand attack upon Richmond which would end the rebellion. The collection of raw recruits which had streamed into Washington was, according to the New York newspapers, "the greatest army the world ever saw; perfect in officers and discipline; unsurpassed in devotion and courage." Even President Lincoln greatly deceived himself as to the determined character of the resistance which would be encountered in any attempt to penetrate Virginia, and was persuaded into an advocacy of the attack on the Confederate line at Bull Run.

Probably no proud nation ever went into a battle so ill advisedly. McDowell was to command the movement, while old General Scott dozed upon his couch in Washington, his position when Lincoln repaired to his office to learn of the progress of the engagement. "If old Scott had legs he'd be good for a big thing yet," said one of his visitors. But he had no legs nor did McDowell have a map of Virginia. It was declared that no military chart of that state was in existence. There was no knowledge even of the direction of the roads and the cry of "On to Richmond," when it first was heard in the North was accompanied with as little detailed information concerning the methods of reaching that city, as can well be presupposed of educated men in a country commonly governed for seventy-five years. To the Northern soldiers the parade into Virginia was like an expedition into a foreign land, rather than one of the American

States, but the movement was undertaken as light-heartedly as a picnic or a rabbit hunt.

Not only did the soldiers go forward in the spirit of the holiday, but the entire population of Washington was similarly possessed of a desire to participate in the merrymaking. Members of Congress accompanied by their ladies went out to the field with rugs, opera-glasses and telescopes, intending to view the battle, as a football game, from safe points of vantage. The aristocracy mingled with the riffraff of the city, in the train of the soldiery. Gigs, hacks and all available wheeled vehicles were impressed into the service. The correspondent of the *London Times*, was for long unable to secure a mount for use in carrying him to the front. The price of hire for a spavined horse he was told would be \$1,000 which, when he objected, drew from the owner, avaricious to profit by the rare opportunity, this response:

“Well, take it or leave it! If you want to see this fight, a thousand dollars is cheap. I guess there were chaps paid more than that to see Jenny Lind on her first night, and this battle is not going to be repeated.”

The collision occurred on Sunday, July 21st. In Washington there was absolute confidence in a triumphant advance. Senator Sumner said that General Scott told him that the Federals would be in Richmond by Saturday night, but instead the whole army almost immediately fell into full retreat. Sightseers and troops in a confused mass were pour-

ing into Washington and some of the men, their time expiring, did not cease running till they had reached their homes, weary of the whole profession of soldiering. Although themselves entirely unprepared for battle and ignorant of the advantage they might have won had they pressed their pursuit, the Confederates appeared under the leadership of Thomas Jonathan Jackson who, in this engagement, won for himself the lasting sobriquet of "Stonewall." A Southern prisoner, asked once for his opinion of the relative value of Confederate commanders, replied: "Ah! Colonel Johnsing, we guess to be the retreatin'est general we ever had; but the grittiest and the flankin'est was Stonewall Jackson." These qualities were displayed by Jackson to vast advantage at Bull Run and the panic induced by his operations, although at the head of no very formidable force, was equal to that in a playhouse at a cry of fire. Guns, ammunition carriages, pleasure wagons, provision trains, men on horseback, pedestrians and troops, senators, congressmen and idlers from Northern cities stumbled over each other, throwing their arms, coats and canteens by the way, while shouts that the rebel cavalry were coming to cut down the stragglers, filled every one with a terror like that inspired on the Turkish frontiers by the Bashi Bazouks. A stand was finally effected with a considerable body of troops short of the streets of Washington, and since the Confederates failed to



pursue the fleeing bluecoats, the city soon regained some measure of its composure.

Bitter disappointment, sleepless nights with a cool and inflexible determination to go forward on his course characterized the commander-in-chief of the armies and navies of the United States in the White House. Promiscuous criticism and recrimination characterized the Northern newspapers, but after the first flush of indignation and surprise the people sullenly buckled on their armor for a long war.

Congress, which had been called to meet in extra session on July 4th, had learned from the President in his inaugural address before this disastrous battle had yet been fought that he would require at least 400,000 men and \$400,000,000. "That number of men," he said, "is about one-tenth of those of proper ages within the regions where apparently all are willing to engage, and the sum is less than a twenty-third part of the money value owned by the men who seem ready to devote the whole." He added that a right result at this time will be "worth more to the world than ten times the money." The issue, he said, "embraces more than the fate of these United States. It presents to the whole family of man the question whether a constitutional republic or democracy—a government of the people by the same people—can or cannot maintain its territorial integrity against its own domestic foes. . . . Our popular government has often been called an experiment. Two points

in it our own people have already settled—the successful establishing and the successful administering of it. One still remains—its successful maintenance against a formidable attempt to overturn it.”

Congress pledged its support to the president with alacrity. It even exceeded his expectation and voted him 500,000 volunteers for a service of three years besides authorizing an increase of the regular army. It now understood something of the gravity of the issue. Some of its members had witnessed the battle of Bull Run, and one, at least, caught within the Confederate lines, was taken away to linger for a season in Libby Prison. A conviction of the reality of the crisis with which it was immediately face to face settled upon the North, and it poured forth in loyal devotion its population and treasure, although still with but a faint conception of the severity and the duration of the exertions to be demanded of it in the contest to maintain the authority of the constitution and the laws.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ENGLAND AND THE SOUTH

It is difficult to know what evil genius, as it seems to most Americans and all Englishmen at this distance of time, guided public opinion in Great Britain in the early years of the Civil War. The recent relations of the two governments had been quite friendly. Lexington and Bunker Hill and the sack of Washington in 1814, with which American children have long been ingrained through the study of their school-books, were at the time rather quiescent issues. The Prince of Wales had visited the United States in 1860, and it was felt that his tour of the country bringing, as he did the messages of good will from the queen and her respected prince consort, would serve effectually to heal any old breaches of misunderstanding and difference. The young visitor planted a chestnut in the mould at Mount Vernon when the *London Times* remarked with some international gusto : "It seemed as the royal youth closed the earth around the little germ that he was burying the last faint trace of discord between us and our great brethren in the West."

England had abolished slavery in the West Indies and through the efforts of her philanthropists was

proud to say, with some degree of moral superiority, that the curse had been permanently banished from her dominions. The emissaries from her prominent journals who were here to interpret the situation for the most learned and cultivated public opinion in the British Islands plainly expressed their loathing of the institution as it was exhibited to them upon their arrival in this country. Edward Dicey, who came to report the war for the *Spectator*, was told everywhere in the South that the slaves were contented and happy, and had no wish to be free,<sup>1</sup> a statement he could not reconcile with the nauseating advertisements which he read in the Baltimore newspapers.

“TWENTY-FIVE DOLLARS REWARD.—Ran away March 20th from the farm of Mrs. S. B. Mayo in Anne Arundel County, negro boy, John Stewart. He is nineteen or twenty years of age; five feet nine or ten inches high; very prominent mouth and large front teeth; light complexion; has a stupid look when spoken to; his father lives in Annapolis. Any one who will arrest and secure him in jail can receive the above reward.

“T. H. GAITHER, Howard County.

“Ran away from the subscriber 13th March, negro woman, Ellen, aged about forty years and her boy Joe, aged seven years. They are both yellow color. Ellen has a defect in one eye; Joe is bright yellow. I will pay a liberal reward for their arrest.

“JOSEPH M. BOSLEY.”

The laws establishing such penalties for offenses

<sup>1</sup> “Six months in the Federal States,” Vol. I, p. 253.

by slaves as flogging on the bare back, cropping of ears and branding on the cheek, still unrepealed in a number of Southern states, filled Mr. Dicey with inexpressible disgust.

William H. Russell who had come out for the *London Times*, found, during his tour of the South, to his astonishment, that there were laws forbidding the education of slaves. He saw overseers directing gangs of negroes, male and female, with heavy thonged whips. Among the women there was a class known as "suckers," who were permitted to go home at certain times during the day to give their babes the breast. The negroes were fed in barracks upon corn bread, molasses, pork and sometimes fish. The owner regarded slavery, said Mr. Russell, as a guarantee against the exactions of the organized trades union, so disturbing to the employer under any system of free labor. The interest upon \$600 or \$1,000, the invested value of the slave, added to the cost of sustenance, was a very low wage, even considering the chance of working him out in a few years and the possibility of his escape from bondage which was very slight in the Gulf states. From the advertisements it was plain that slaves were identified by cuts and brands left by repeated lashings. In Richmond, Mr. Russell was offended by a sign board exhibited prominently in the street :

"Smith and Company advance money on slaves, and have constant supplies of Virginia negroes on sale or hire."



He attended a slave auction where men and even women were stripped and fingered by prospective buyers, gathered together as at a horse bazaar from many different places. Often the negroes were manacled. Sometimes they were compelled to show whether they were of good parts, by running about in front of the auction block. An auctioneer in Mr. Russell's presence cried out: "A prime field hand! Just look at him—good natered, well tempered; no marks, nary sign of bad about him; en-i-ne hunthered—only nine hun-ther-ed an' fifty dol'rs for 'im. Why it's quite radaklous! Nine hundred and fifty dol'rs. I can't raly—that's good. Thank you, sir. Twenty-five bid—nine huntherd and seventy-five dol'rs for this most useful hand."

Thus the negro was knocked down, paid for and taken away. "That nigger went cheap," said one onlooker to a companion. "Yes, sir," was the response. "Niggers is cheap now—that's a fact."

The slaveholder's philosophy, Mr. Russell said, when his observations were done, could be summed up in one short sentence: "See how fat my pigs are."

But Englishmen with a few estimable exceptions chose not to consider the American war as a contest for the extinction of slavery, a view in which they were enforced by President Lincoln's settled determination to make it a war for the Union and not for the negro, for shrewd reasons of state to be described in another place. Jefferson Davis on his

side, too, with something of the same tactical skill, strove to conceal the issue. The Southern people were not fighting for slavery but for independence, said he, "and that or extermination they would have."

This view of the case was diligently propagated in England by William L. Yancey who, with some of the power of Mirabeau, having incited the South to a revolution to redress its wrongs, now appeared in Europe as a Confederate commissioner. He spoke in many places and won a vast amount of attention, especially in Lancashire in the spinning and weaving districts of England long supplied with cotton from the Southern states. Lord John Russell, England's minister of Foreign Affairs, spoke of the Union as "a confederation," to which the return of the states in secession was "a hopeless dream." Lord Palmerston, Gladstone, Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, Edward A. Freeman, and indeed nearly all of Great Britain's political and literary men of foremost rank, as well as the principal British reviews and newspapers declared, and the wish seemed parent to the thought, that democracy in America had been tried and had sadly failed. Each state was large enough, according to the standards of Europe, for a separate republic, and no evil would come from a division of the Union. Refusing to recognize that it was a war for the destruction of slavery, Dr. Mackay, who represented an English journal in America, wrote that, "the struggle between the

North and the South of which the negro is made the pretext is as all the world knows by this time a struggle for political power and ascendancy." So late as in 1863, William H. Russell was still predicting that the Southern states would gain their freedom. He recommended the North to "set themselves at work to accomplish their destiny," losing no time, "in sighing over vanished empire."

George Augustus Sala, as unfriendly an observer as England has ever sent hither to write out his impressions for the British press, discovered three reasons for his countrymen's sympathies for the Confederacy.<sup>1</sup> These were (1) Because if the South wished to secede they conceived that it had the same right to do so as any or all the states had to secede from England in 1776. The issue then was the payment of taxes, not a greater matter than that for which the South contended in 1861.

(2) Because England was convinced upon Mr. Lincoln's own testimony that the war had not been undertaken to free the negro. The slave would have been abandoned to his fate any day if by that act the Union could have been restored.

(3) Because, to quote Mr. Sala's picturesque language, the war was conducted with rapine and atrocity, "than which the wars of Attila and Genseric can show nothing more flagitious and in a spirit worthier of pagans and cannibals than of Christian gentlemen."

<sup>1</sup> "My Diary in America in the Time of War," Vol. I, p. 50.



That the struggle was not a gentleman-like contest caused more than a few excellent Englishmen many conscientious qualms, when they sought a logical cause for their sympathy with a government whose success meant the perpetuation of human slavery. The most usual episodes in war gained an exaggerated cruelty by passage over sea. The learned Marquess of Lothian, in a book written to express his revulsion at the methods pursued by the Northern generals likened one of these, on the strength of a barbarity which had come to his knowledge, to a famous commander of the seventeenth century, who used to relate as a very good joke how his soldiers had sacked a town, finding only a couple of old women there, who being fit for no other purpose, were promptly made into soup.

Yet there were here and there distinguished examples of Englishmen, who perceived the true purposes of the war and correctly gauged its beneficent results were the North to gain the victory. Chief among these were John Stuart Mill and John Bright. "War is an ugly thing," said Mr. Mill in an article in a leading British review, "but not the ugliest of things; the decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks nothing worth a war is worse." He had no doubt of the North's final triumph, if it should not despair, for "they are twice as numerous and ten or twelve times as rich." He deplored the attitude of his government, exaggerating the importance of its action in recognizing the Confederates as belliger-

ents. "At the dawn of a hope that the demon might now at last be chained and flung into the pit," said he, "England stepped in and for the sake of cotton made Satan victorious."

John Bright's ringing appeals for sympathy for the North were heard across the sea, and every loyal Unionist came to regard him as in some sense a personal friend. In a speech in Lancashire in 1861, he said: "The war, be it successful or not, be it wise or not, is a war to sustain the government and to sustain the authority of a great nation." The people of England, if they were true to themselves, could feel no sympathy for "those who wish to build up a great empire on the perpetual bondage of millions of their fellow men."

Again at Birmingham he said with stirring eloquence: "I cannot believe that civilization in its journey with the sun will sink into endless night to gratify the ambition of the leaders of this revolt who seek to

"Wade through slaughter to a throne  
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind.

I have a far other and far brighter vision before my gaze. It may be but a vision, but I will cherish it. I see one vast confederation stretching from the frozen North in unbroken line to the glowing South, and from the wild billows of the Atlantic westward to the calmer waters of the Pacific main—and I see one people, and one law, and one language, and one faith, and over all that wide conti-

ment the home of freedom, and a refuge for the oppressed of every race and of every clime.”

Many in England lived for the recantation,—Mr. Sala to write<sup>1</sup> that in choosing his side, he had been “neither logical nor worldly wise. In short,” he added, “I approved myself to be what is commonly called a fool, but my partiality for Dixie-land was simply and solely due to a sentimental feeling, and at thirty-four years of age it is permissible to possess some slight modicum of sentimentality.”

Mr. Gladstone, alluding in 1896 to his Newcastle speech, in which he declared that Jefferson Davis had made a nation, confessed to his mistake which he said was one of “incredible grossness.” He was the more pained and grieved whenever he reflected upon his action because, said he, “I have for the last five and twenty years received from the government and people of America, tokens of good will which could not fail to arouse my undying gratitude.”<sup>2</sup>

In the meantime the Southern leaders well knew the solicitude of English opinion in their behalf, and exploited it very skilfully. Following the example of the colonies during the Revolutionary war, they diligently sought foreign alliances. They found some favor in the eyes of Napoleon III, who was at this time the government of France, and promptly secured recognition as belligerents

<sup>1</sup> “America Revisited,” Vol. I, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> Morley, “Life of Gladstone,” Vol. II, p. 82.

upon both sides of the channel. President Lincoln and his Secretary of State were not unmindful of the dangers which confronted them abroad. Charles Francis Adams had been selected as the American minister to England, with prophetic knowledge of the need of his learning and skill in diplomacy, were the North to be saved from foreign entanglements. When he left these shores to undertake his mission, it was not without definite instructions covering his action in a conceivable case. "You alone will represent your country, and you will represent the whole of it there," were the words with which he was sent forward by the American Department of State. "When you are asked to divide that duty with others, diplomatic relations between the government of Great Britain and this government will be suspended, and will remain so until it shall be seen which of the two is most strongly intrenched in the confidence of their respective nations and of mankind."

The president and Mr. Seward had agreed upon the point that there should be no intercourse between the British Foreign Office and the Confederate commissioners in London. England and France, acting harmoniously before Mr. Adams had yet reached his post, had issued proclamations of neutrality, thus raising the Southern states to the position of belligerents with the right in the sight of other nations to establish their separate sovereignty, if they were able to do so. The manner in which this act had been executed, and the

anxiety hourly felt lest the next step should be taken, the full recognition of the Confederate government, with its own regularly accredited diplomatic and consular agents, roused Mr. Seward to a sense of the need of some understanding with England concerning the present and future relations of London and Washington. In some ire he sat down to write a dispatch, the contents of which Mr. Adams was desired to lay before Lord Russell. It is commonly stated that had the letter been forwarded as it was first written, grave international difficulties would have certainly ensued, although this point in the nature of the case must remain a matter for speculation. Passing under Lincoln's scrutiny, it was so materially modified in the interest of peaceful diplomacy that its purpose in convincing England of the existence of a firm determination at Washington to require a careful observance of every provision of the law of nations, while at the same time offering no threat or offense of any kind needlessly was very skilfully accomplished.

The president's most important amendment was that the paper should be for Minister Adams' private guidance rather than for transmission to the British government. He substituted the word "hurtful" for "wrongful." For "no one of these proceedings will be borne by the United States," the president wrote, "no one of these proceedings will pass unquestioned." The sentence, "when this act of intervention is distinctly performed we from that hour shall cease to be friends and become

once more, as we have twice before been forced to be, enemies of Great Britain," was entirely eliminated. For "crime" he wrote "error," and the changes were so important in determining the tone of the document,<sup>1</sup> and through that quality the attitude of the two governments in the immediate future that it at once raises Lincoln's service to the country to that rank which President Washington's assumed when, with fixed will during his administration he refused to yield to the foolish clamor for an armed alliance in the name of liberty and equality with the revolutionists in France. In this instance, however, the service could be performed in secrecy, and without awakening the passions of the people, who so often complicate the tasks of the diplomatist, a circumstance which unfortunately did not favor the negotiations at the next critical point in the relations between the two governments.

The commissioners first sent out by the Southern states, having achieved few practical results in Great Britain, the government at Richmond resolved to send abroad James Murray Mason of Virginia, and John Slidell of Louisiana. Both were men of parts, United States senators from their respective states before secession, distinguished by their social and political connections in the South, perhaps as well suited favorably to influence the

<sup>1</sup> For Lincoln's corrections of Seward's draft see "Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln," collected by Allen Thorndyke Rice.

foreign mind as any men who could have been chosen for this important mission. Accompanied by members of their families and their secretaries, they boarded the *Theodora*, a blockade-runner, at Charleston in October, 1861, and were landed safely in Cardenas, Cuba, whence they proceeded overland to Havana. There they were favored with some ostentatious attentions at the hands of the British consul, and in the course of two or three weeks were taken away on a British packet, the *Trent*, which was bound for St. Thomas, whence they would find conveyance to Europe. This steamship had not proceeded far from the Cuban coast when she was hove to by the *San Jacinto*, a United States war sloop commanded by Captain Charles Wilkes, of repute and experience in South Polar exploration. The *Trent* was searched, Mason and Slidell were seized and made prisoners, though not without sufficient appearance of resistance to give color to the case, when it should reach the stages of public adjustment.

After detaining the ship for about two hours, Wilkes headed for Fortress Monroe, where he proudly reported his act. The news was received with vociferous delight in Washington, and in truth in all the Northern states. Proceeding under orders to place his prisoners in a fort in Boston, in the heart of the Abolition country, Wilkes at once became a great popular idol. He was banquetted in Boston, New York and other Northern cities. Governor Andrew of Massachusetts, the Chief Jus-

tice of that state, and other New Englanders of light and leading, participated publicly in the rejoicings. Secretary of the Navy Welles, who wore "a long white beard and a stupendous white wig which caused him to look like the heavy grandfather in a genteel comedy," the New York *Herald's* "modern Rip Van Winkle" of the Lincoln Cabinet, officially approved of Captain Wilkes' action. His conduct, said the secretary, "in seizing these public enemies was marked by intelligent ability, decision and firmness, and has the emphatic approval of this Department." Even Secretary Seward, Mr. Welles has said, whether or not to draw away the fire of later criticism from his own person, was at first jubilant at the capture.<sup>1</sup> The House of Representatives impulsively passed a resolution tendering its thanks to the commander of the *San Jacinto*, and one member proposed that he should be presented with a gold medal. The newspapers of the North were at no pains to conceal their pleasure in the accomplishment of the deed. There were altered versions of "God Save the Queen" :

" God save me, great John Bull,  
 Long keep my pocket full,  
 God save John Bull.  
 Ever victorious,  
 Haughty, vainglorious,  
 Snobbish, censorious,  
 God save John Bull."

An awakening as to the danger of the act came

<sup>1</sup> Welles, "Lincoln and Seward," p. 187.



very promptly. The London *Chronicle* declared that Congress "must sit down like ancient Pistol to eat the leek it had insultingly brandished in British faces." The search of the *Trent* was regarded as "an act of wanton violence and outrage." Great Britain immediately began active preparations for defense, crediting Mr. Seward with designs upon Canada ; a panic seized the stock markets, and the United States was face to face with a war with England as well as with her internal foes.

Lord Palmerston's first demand was for a complete disavowal of the act, the release of the prisoners and their return to Great Britain's protection, under which they stood at the time of their capture, else his government's American minister, Lord Lyons, would be withdrawn. Almost the last official act of the prince consort's life, then nearly run its course, was to modify the asperities of this note, thus playing an important part in the peaceful adjustment of the difficulty. The demand finally took the form of a request for an apology, with the liberation of Mason and Slidell, seven days being allowed the United States for her reply, when, if satisfaction were not given, diplomatic relations would be broken off.

From the first, Mr. Lincoln's characteristic caution and common sense led him to look askance at Captain Wilkes' achievement. His disapprobation grew upon consultation with Charles Sumner, who early became the president's trusted companion and friend, though no two men could well have been

more different. "Sumner," said Lincoln, "is my idea of a bishop." The Massachusetts senator was disposed to regard the capture of Mason and Slidell with much misgiving. The president, when visitors hurried to him for an opinion, contented himself by relating equivocal anecdotes, and to one he plainly declared that he feared the prisoners would prove to be "white elephants." There were prolonged conferences between Lord Lyons and Mr. Seward, and Seward and the president, the Secretary of State at length writing his famous reply to the English note, a masterly document, one of the most remarkable, perhaps, for its scholarliness and understanding of statecraft which has ever issued from the United States Foreign Office.

Very early the president, through Mr. Seward, had declared that the capture was effected upon Captain Wilkes' own initiation, and without authorization from Washington. He was, therefore, in a position to make further disavowals if that course were necessary to mollify English opinion. Mr. Seward had vast opportunities here for a display of his skill as a constitutional lawyer and his cleverness in dialectics. It was his task to show that what Great Britain now contended for concerning the right of search was precisely what the United States had contended for against her during the War of 1812. He believed that Captain Wilkes had kept within the terms of the law of nations, except in failing to take the vessel into custody for an orderly judicial determination of the question of

contraband before a prize court. The regularity of the proceeding had been departed from at this point. Under all the circumstances, the seizure having been made without authority, Mr. Seward found it not difficult to disavow the act and liberate the prisoners "cheerfully." They were delivered at Provincetown, Mass., to a British sloop-of-war, to be taken to St. Thomas to continue their journey, which had been interrupted while bound to that point seventy days before.<sup>1</sup> Their adventure profited them little enough in Europe, where they could not be received as commissioners, since Lord Russell had officially declared they were not contraband. They were everywhere branded with suspicion, and commerce with them at once indicated open secessionist sympathies. The incident also brought home to England a fuller sense of the responsibilities of her position as a neutral in the war.

As for opinion in the North, it quite generally regarded the surrender of Mason and Slidell as in some sense a national humiliation, to be avenged in a more fortunate season when the nation was not occupied with foes in its own midst, passing on a grudge that contributed more than any other thing to render unhappy for more than thirty years the state of the American mind toward Great Britain. The presence of Russian fleets in Federal waters, both on the Atlantic and the Pacific coasts, by many taken to be an echo of the Crimea, was a fortunate

<sup>1</sup> Thomas L. Harris, "The Trent Affair," p. 226.

incident silently working, it was freely asserted, to make England abate something of her bellicose attitude. This fact at any rate was of some value in consoling the people with the issue, eager as they always are to find a leek for the other man, while engaged in the unhappy occupation of eating their own. A Richmond newspaper remarked that the American eagle had "screched his loudest screech of defiance then —

" ' Dropt like a craven cock his conquered wing.' "

Vallandigham and the Copperheads of the North sought to have it appear that the United States had sacrificed all character for dignity as a member of the family of nations. To President Lincoln, and men who thought as he, it was enough at the moment to know that the government had escaped a great foreign war, and could continue to give its undivided attention to the recovery of the Southern states.

## CHAPTER IX

### ANXIOUS YEARS

THE Federal recruits were not yet in composure after their precipitate flight into Washington from Bull Run, before President Lincoln had convinced himself that the army must be subjected to a prolonged season of discipline, if it were to be made fit for effective military operations. Scott, too aged for active service, and in partial public disgrace with McDowell for the results at Bull Run, must make way for a younger man. Captain Montgomery C. Meigs told the president that the army needed a commander, who in case of battle could mount a horse, and Mr. Lincoln and his advisers pitched upon a young man thirty-five years of age, George B. McClellan, the son of a distinguished physician in Philadelphia, whose rapid transformation from the administrative offices of a Western railway to Napoleonic heights of repute as a warrior, has not been surpassed by anything in the line of hero-making in the long record of impulsive popular movements which are attributed to the climate in the belt of soil occupied by the American nation. It is true he had enjoyed the training at West Point, and had won the brevet of captain when just out of his teens in an engineer corps in the Mexican

War. Subsequently he had made some surveys for the government, written manuals on military tactics, and went to Europe as a member of an official commission, where he viewed the operations in the Crimea. At the outbreak of the contest he was the president of the Ohio and Mississippi Railroad. The governor of Ohio promoted him at one leap from a captaincy to the rank of major-general in command of all the troops sent into the field from that state, and he promptly received confirmation in his title by a similar appointment at the hands of the authorities in Washington. He was now no longer a major-general of militia, but a major-general in the United States Army, and was given command of the so-called Department of the Ohio, consisting of the states of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, which was soon enlarged to include Missouri and parts of Western Pennsylvania and Virginia.

While the battle of Bull Run was being fought he was operating in the loyal counties of western Virginia and along the Ohio line, whence with a few skirmishes to his credit, he was called to Washington to a still higher place. A magic wand could not have wrought wonders more swiftly. McClellan's promotion to Scott's place was not immediate. His duties for the time being would be as commander of the Army of the Potomac, the United States forces assembled upon both sides of that river, when he came to Washington, a body of few more than 50,000 men. He was for the moment to divide his functions with old Gen-

eral Scott and perform that part of the work which involved activity in the field, to be confined more particularly at present to the organization of the regiments which in almost endless numbers poured into the capital from all the free states to be drilled and vitalized into a useful army. He was called to Washington the day after Bull Run, and in three months, or by the time he succeeded General Scott in full command of the military forces of the United States, on November 1, 1861, the Army of the Potomac had been raised to a strength of about 200,000 men.

Instead of taking his place with the army in Virginia, he resided in Washington. Erect on a finely caparisoned steed, he rode from post to post, and was promptly denominated a "Young Napoleon" by the press which fawned upon him and saw in him the embodiment of national courage and might. He told his troops that hereafter they could ask "no higher honor than the proud consciousness that they belonged to the Army of the Potomac." His affability and culture brought him great social popularity. He was a lion in Washington drawing-rooms, and in banquetting and conversation shone brilliantly. He was given to the writing of letters upon subjects in no manner connected with his line of duty, especially on political matters, and criticised when he did not pity the "incapables" who were at the head of the government departments. His portraits were exhibited everywhere in the shop windows, the presi-

dent called him George, and came frequently to visit him, until rebuked by the young commander, after waiting an hour or more for an audience, through an orderly who was commissioned to say that General McClellan had gone to bed. The general conferred often with Vallandigham and the Northern Copperheads in and out of Congress, who made his headquarters their rendezvous and once, says W. D. Kelley, the president was compelled to wait at the door for a long time for an interview, while a coterie of these gentlemen planned his own undoing. In spite of what would seem to be an intolerable relationship—in any case wholly unmilitary and ill-adapted to serve the end in view, the suppression of the rebellion, the general was trusted by Lincoln, whose devotion was long in being shattered, beloved by the group of officers whom he gathered into his staff, as well as by the rank and file of his troops, and the idol of vast bodies of the people whose love and confidence he did not forfeit even after his departure from places of power.

To the president's suggestion that he should "feel the enemy," his response was that it was too strong for him. He was not yet ready. He must have more officers, more troops, more artillery. These were all dealt out to him unstintedly, month after month. General Scott stepped aside, and he was brought into that direct contact with the departments which he desired, but McClellan could not be induced to advance with an army which, by

<sup>1</sup>"Lincoln and Stanton," p. 7.



this time, the country implicitly believed to be invincible. When in December there was sign of his moving forward, he fell sick, and for weeks together, awaiting his recovery, the troops rested in idleness, the president with increasing difficulty standing between him in his inexplicable inaction and a public clamorous for battles and victories.

Meanwhile, Lincoln was constantly gaining a fuller mastery of the military problem, and with maps before him at his desk, in the executive mansion, he kept himself informed of the position of all divisions of the army, calculating with a nice precision the probable situation of the enemy facing each body of Union troops. He conferred at length and frequently with generals, admirals, senators, congressmen, civilians of all ranks from whom he might glean anything of value concerning the management of the war. "All quiet on the Potomac," was the word sent home by the newspaper correspondents nightly, and the phrase soon found its way into a popular song. "Mac, the Unready," the "Little Corporal of Unfought Fields," became the object of much ridicule where before there had been only praise. His, said the New York *Herald*, was a "masterly inactivity." While the army rested, the flower of the young manhood of the North was rotting in the Virginia swamps, thousands upon thousands dying of fevers or being invalided home.

The first change in the Lincoln cabinet was signaled in the decision of the president to relieve

Mr. Cameron of the war portfolio. The Pennsylvania leader was taken into the cabinet only after he had gained much disagreeable notoriety in the national eye for his political methods. Already there were some unpleasant incidents in his administration of the office, although he had occupied it less than a year, as in his order in reference to the arming of slaves. There were complaints in plenty, too, of dishonest contracts with charges that the department was supplying the soldiers with spavined mounts, leaky tents, shoddy uniforms and blankets, and stale biscuit and meat. The brunt of these scandals fell upon Mr. Cameron, and very quietly and politely it was suggested that he should take the Russian mission and make way for Edwin M. Stanton. The latter, most curiously heady and impetuous, until lately had been a Democrat in full standing. He was an Ohio lawyer, and had come into Buchanan's cabinet as Secretary of War at the last moment as a necessary man. He at once distinguished himself in his opposition to the secessionists in Buchanan's group of counselors. He had spoken not six months since of "the painful imbecility of Lincoln," and the "venality and corruption" of the administration, but of such stuff are great war ministers sometimes made. He was the man for the place, and Lincoln satisfying himself on this point, gave him the post.

Stanton was no sooner in his chair than he turned his attention to the dilatory, obstreperous and disobedient general-in-chief. Urged forward through

all the old and new agencies, though not without many unhappy personal passages, McClellan took up his march to Richmond by way of the lower Chesapeake, thus beginning his famous Peninsular campaign. This movement was entirely against the advice of the president and such counsel as he was able to get from leaders whose judgment he highly valued. McClellan would give his endorsement to no other line of campaign, the president yet knew of no general to whom he was ready to transfer the command, and leaving a force adjudged to be large enough for the protection of the capital, the Army of the Potomac moved down the Chesapeake for its invasion of the Peninsula, that tongue of land lying southeast of Richmond between the York and James rivers. The president had definitely ordered an advance February 22, 1862, but McClellan must first parade his army up and down the deep roads of Virginia to experience them, as he explained, in the art of marching, and it was the 5th of April before the 136,000 men of which the force was composed, including their batteries and ammunition and baggage trains, were landed from their transports at Fort Monroe. The President had waived all objections as to routes and plans of campaign. All else would be made subordinate, if standing no longer on the order of his going, McClellan would but go—and fight.

By his famous War Order Number 3 of March 11, 1862, Lincoln relieved McClellan of further performance of his duties as general-in-chief that he

might devote his undistracted attention to the campaign against Richmond, thus opening the way for a salutary change of leadership in the West where Halleck was raised to an important command. The only aspect of hope and good cheer yet given to Federal affairs, arose from a few brilliant naval successes, represented by the sinking of the *Merri-mac*, the capture of New Orleans, and some advantageous land movements on the shores of the Mississippi.

In the Peninsula, McClellan's hallucinations as to the overwhelming strength of the enemy in front of him continued. He drilled and reviewed and dug entrenchments, like the practiced engineer that he was, and imperiously demanded more men, more guns and more support from Washington, where cabals in his imagination were always at work to hinder the fruition of his simplest plans. Stanton once declared that if McClellan "had a million men he would swear the enemy had two millions, and then he would sit down in the mud and yell for three." In his private letters at this time he writes of Washington as that "sink of iniquity," and of Lincoln, Stanton and their associates as "those treacherous hounds," but in May, detachments of his army met bodies of Confederates, and some expensive fighting was indulged in in an effort to open the way to Richmond. In June the Union advance guard had reached a point within four miles of the secession capital. Because of the extreme deliberation of his movements the Confed-

erates were enabled to mass a large army in front of him, and after a number of sanguinary engagements in which the victory seemed to rest with the Union army, its commander withdrew to Harrison's Landing, and thus disappointingly ended the campaign, ill-starred from the moment it was undertaken. The army had come nearer to Richmond than it was destined to do again for three years. It had fought bravely in a number of engagements and displayed at many points personal courage and collective morale superior to that of the force arrayed against it, but the movement had failed,—McClellan declared, because of the omission of Washington to sustain him with the necessary numbers of troops, Washington because of what General Sherman afterward very temperately described as "a spirit not consistent with the duty of a commanding general of a great army."

Lincoln's personal disappointment at the result reached the stage of the severest distress, but he did not give way to discouragement. To Secretary Seward he wrote: "I expect to maintain this contest until successful, or till I die, or am conquered, or my term expires, or Congress or the country forsake me." On July 1st he called for 300,000 new troops who came into the camps to the refrain

"We are coming, Father Abra'am, three hundred thousand more,

From Mississippi's winding stream, and from New England's shore."

His communications to McClellan were indulgent and fatherly, while the general busily employed himself in a work for which he thought himself entitled to a great deal of credit, that of "saving" his army. Mr. Lincoln, unable to gain an intelligible opinion of the situation from conflicting reports, determined to visit the camp in person, and upon the 8th of July arrived at Harrison's Landing. He came back little cheered by what he had seen. The public patience was becoming well exhausted, as was also the president's. So favorably impressed was he by this time with Halleck's military abilities, that on July 11, 1862, that general was brought to Washington to take the post of general-in-chief, an office while he held it, as Nicolay and Hay observe, never more than chief-of-staff to the president. Mr. Lincoln had now become his own general-in-chief, and held that post masterfully until Grant came forward to lend his comprehending genius to the work of solving the problems of the war.

As a further step preliminary to a complete change in command General Pope, another successful Western man was brought East, and for him was created the new Army of Virginia, rightfully regarded as in some respects a rival of the Army of the Potomac. Pope was unfortunate in some criticisms publicly offered, concerning the conduct of the war, in the East and thus forfeited the right to the cordial support of McClellan and McClellan's friends which might have been denied him in any

case. Because of the apparently studied effort to accomplish his undoing, the second battle of Bull Run, fought in the last days of August, 1862, ended most disastrously. Although McClellan and his troops were ordered back from the Peninsula to give Pope support, the movement was delayed and cooperation was reluctantly accorded him, the misfortunes of this much-vaunted general out of the West seeming to answer their dearest desires. The Union army in somewhat the same way as in 1861, retreated in disorder, stragglers and broken battalions again appearing in the streets of Washington. If the "Young Napoleon" had failed, so had Pope. As faithful as the old one-legged French veteran of many battles, Chauvin, who on every occasion for fifty years after Napoleon's death chanted the praises of his chief, McClellan's friends were now glad to see the way open for their idol's rehabilitation. "He had so skilfully handled his troops in not getting them to Richmond as to retain their confidence," said Mr. Welles,<sup>1</sup> and Lincoln, with the politician's eye, studied and mastered the situation. Against the most emphatic protests of the leading members of his Cabinet, against what was very clearly the sentiment of the country at large, barring groups of McClellan's own partisans, the president suggested his reinstatement. McClellan's course at Bull Run, out of which rose the Fitz-John Porter court-martial and the cashiering of that officer, was to

<sup>1</sup> "Lincoln and Seward," p. 194.

most men an unpardonable offense. "As an exhibition of military insubordination and persistent disobedience within the sound of an enemy's guns," one critic has said, "it is unparalleled in modern history."<sup>1</sup> McClellan's treatment of Pope was "atrocious," Lincoln himself averred. "It is shocking to see and know this but," he added, "there is no remedy at present." Convincing himself that the situation was critical, and that no other policy was at the moment more feasible, he turned again to McClellan, seeking to take advantage of his popularity with the soldiers, and his unquestioned talent as an organizer to protect the capital and restore discipline among the troops.

Even Mr. Lincoln's friends have never found it easy to defend this act. The rare forgiveness of his character; the state of the country politically, McClellan having made himself the Democratic leader, and a desire not to exhibit personal or partisan pique; the love borne their commander by the soldiers and the gravity of the hour are all urged as reasons for the president's headstrong, unnatural and, as it seemed, wholly unwise course. The most rational explanation of the act is the one having to do with political sentiment in the army and in the country at large. The autumn elections were drawing nigh and they promised not to be favorable to the administration. Men openly boasted in Pennsylvania and other states, so congressmen said when they came to Washington after

<sup>1</sup> W. D. Kelley, "Lincoln and Stanton," p. 56.



the campaign had ended, that they would like to see Lincoln hanged to a Washington lamp-post, and not a few of them upon getting up of mornings to read their newspapers, expected to learn that he had met this fate.

The kindest interpretation of the act makes Mr. Lincoln the guardian of the morale of the Army of the Potomac. He wished to show the troops that when he erred he was manly enough to confess his mistakes and correct them, thus popularizing himself with the men and in the end coming to occupy a place in their esteem higher than any McClellan had ever held. That the situation had in it a critical element was made very clear, when General Lee in a few days crossed the Potomac with his entire army in the hope of firing the heart of Maryland, and visiting fresh humiliations upon the Northern states. McClellan's conduct of the battle of Antietam, although severely criticised, went a little way to reinstate him in the good opinion of the country, and with more promptitude and intelligent activity on his part, he might have converted it into a sweeping victory. With a large corps of fresh troops in reserve he failed to press General Lee whose rear guard was disappearing across the river, unmolested by a superior force that had just gained undoubted advantages and could have been used to inflict further punishment upon the ragged Southern soldiery. Instead McClellan rested, telegraphing to Washington in some glee: "The enemy is

driven back into Virginia. Maryland and Pennsylvania are now safe."

For weeks the president waited for the general to follow Lee, who had not moved very far south of the river, and give him battle in Virginia. The Confederate cavalymen swept around the entire Union army, and came out on the other side in safety, as they had treated it once before on the Peninsula. Stuart and his men this time raided into Pennsylvania and returned to Southern soil with the loss of only one trooper who was captured by a few farmers. Lincoln again visited the Army of the Potomac, and held long conferences with its commanding officer. There was more kindly and paternal advice, more recommendation and urgent command, all of which was replied to by the usual requests for reinforcements, horses and supplies denied him, as McClellan continued to allege, through mismanagement and the enmity to his person displayed in high political positions at Washington. At his headquarters the staff officers still employed themselves with political discussions and partisan plots, and one of the offenders, being brought before the president, was summarily dismissed from the service.

The elections over, the president at last decided to rid the country of the dilatory commander, whose army could never move so long as a horse had a sore tongue or a soldier lacked a perfect shoe-lace, the order to turn it over to General Burnside and report for further instructions at Trenton, N. J.,

having reached McClellan on November 7th. "Alas for my poor country," the deposed commander remarked as he looked up from a letter he was writing when the message came,<sup>1</sup> and in subsequent years he thought the nation fortunate that he had not taken the advice of many of his admirers who would have had him refuse to obey the order and march upon Washington "to take possession of the government."<sup>2</sup> Thus ended the military career of a man whom his friends defended unto the end with a singular loyalty; whom others were willing to dismiss from their attention as "a pampered and petulant egotist."<sup>3</sup> It is demonstrable that he was honestly desirous of saving the Union, but of the qualifications of the general he had none, except those that are possessed by the engineer and the drillmaster, and his political interests and ambitions, coupled with his peculiar vanity, wholly interfered with a proper performance of the duties of the commander of a great army.

There was as yet a notable lack of men whose achievements inevitably marked them out for important commands. In McClellan's place it was suggested that "Fighting Joe" Hooker might be installed, but Lincoln in consultation with his friends inclined to Burnside, whom he regarded as "the better housekeeper." A housekeeper was not the need of the time, some one urged; the demand

<sup>1</sup> "McClellan's Own Story," p. 660.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 652.

<sup>3</sup> Kelley, "Lincoln and Stanton," p. 51.

was for a man who would fight. Lincoln replied that more fighting could be got out of soldiers and animals when they were well cared for, and he wished to bring to an end a *régime* which was remarkable for the frightful disparity between the amount of troops and *matériel* furnished to the army and the amount which in time of need proved to be effective in a movement against the enemy. Thus General Burnside, a devoted friend of McClellan, who thought himself unsuited for so important a post, an opinion in which he was not mistaken, and who was disinclined to assist in the humiliation of his chief, was proffered the command of the Army of the Potomac. Next in rank to McClellan it was a natural promotion. He had enjoyed some independent successes in North Carolina, and the appointment was for the most part very favorably received by those who had long recommended a policy of greater military activity.

Burnside had a plan for the advance upon Richmond by way of Fredericksburg, and held to it obstinately in spite of an effort to persuade him to conduct his campaign along a different line. There was misunderstanding between him and Halleck. Late in November the president again visited the army which its commander, in pleasing contrast with his famous predecessor, declared to be large enough for all present uses, and the time soon came for Burnside to cross the Rappahannock and march upon the Confederates, commanded by three of the best Southern generals who had entrenched them-

selves formidably upon a range of hills. It was a movement to certain death for multitudes of Union soldiers who, to their credit, be it said, followed their commanders' orders so long as it was within human power to do so. It was taken on the 13th of December, and thousands of men were put out of action in a few minutes in senseless assaults upon a natural fortress, bristling with batteries that no troops in any uniform could have hoped to capture. Burnside doggedly sought to continue the attack, but with all his officers urging retirement and protesting against the useless slaughter of their favorite battalions, he gave it up and recrossed the river.

The year went out in a blaze of Confederate victories. General Halleck had taken offense at a letter from the president who needed to withdraw it in order to keep with him his general-in-chief, and Burnside because of inharmonious relations with his superiors, intimated that his resignation might be presented at any moment. "If there is any man out of hell suffering more than I, I pity him," exclaimed the president with characteristic vividness. When Thurlow Weed went with Seward to the White House in December, 1862, he says that "we found the president deeply depressed and distressed. I had never seen him in such a mood." They had not been with him long when he broke out: "Everything goes wrong. The rebel armies hold their own; Grant is wandering around in Mississippi; Burnside manages to keep ahead of Lee; Seymour has carried New York, and if his party

carries and holds many of the Northern states, we shall have to give up the fight, for we can never conquer three-fourths of our countrymen scattered in front, flank and rear. What shall we do?" It was suggested that the correct policy was to wait. The man to lead the armies would come forward in time. The general who lost a battle should be replaced by another, and so on indefinitely until at last one should be found of enough ability and skill to overpower the enemy and bring the war to an end.

Burnside, unlike McClellan, was willing to assume the responsibility for his failures. He bore the blame after the battle of Fredericksburg; he would do it again for his "mud march" which ended his service as the general in command of the Army of the Potomac. Persisting in his determination to cross the Rappahannock, he set his army in motion late in January, against the advice of the authorities at Washington and his staff officers. The roads were impassable with deep mud; hundreds of horses died in the traces as they tugged vainly at the heavy guns, and obstinate in his resolution to make the advance, he was now compelled to admit its impossibility, sullenly turning back when the ground, wet with unceasing rains, showed no sign of giving him a solid bottom for his movements. Even before this final unhappy adventure Burnside's strength with his men was hopelessly shaken. The soldiers lacked faith in him, a condition of things little likely to bring success to any

army. He went to the president with the request that a number of his generals should be dismissed for insubordination, else he would offer his resignation. The latter alternative, couched in agreeable terms—a leave of absence for thirty days with a subsequent transfer to the Department of the Ohio—was chosen without debate and events clearly pointed to “Fighting Joe” Hooker as the next man for this high command.

Hooker’s courage had been put to a test on several battle-fields, and his popular title was one that he very well deserved. He had protested against the useless slaughter of his men at Fredericksburg, but when there was no choice, he put spurs to his horse and led them against the enemy’s works with indomitable bravery. His faults, as they had thus far developed, had chiefly to do with a tongue over which he had imperfect control. He had upon a recent occasion stated that the government at Washington was in imbecile hands, and that the cause of the Union would not thrive until the government should be administered by a dictator. In appointing this man to so important a post, Lincoln again gave evidence of his disposition to forgive and to harbor no personal resentments at the expense of the national service. He convinced himself that Hooker was the man for the work, and with frank and paternal advice, dealt out freely on so many sides which did as much to win him the title of “Father Abraham” as his kindness to all sorts and conditions of men, women and children

who asked favors of him at the White House, he raised Hooker to command.

“I have heard in such a way as to believe it,” the president observed, “of your recently saying that both the army and the government needed a dictator. Of course it was not for this, but in spite of it, that I have given you the command. Only those generals who gain successes can set up dictators. What I now ask of you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship.” He was reproved for the disposition he had shown while serving under Burnside to criticise the commanding general, and the fear was expressed that this spirit would continue to exert its ruinous effects. “Neither you nor Napoleon, if he were alive again,” said Mr. Lincoln, “could get any good out of an army while such a spirit prevails in it. And now beware of rashness. Beware of rashness, but with energy and sleepless vigilance go forward and give us victories.”

“He talks to me like a father,” said Hooker upon receipt of this epistle, and so in fact Lincoln was, the father of his whole people whose greatest task and highest service was in allaying the bitter-nesses that envy, malice and conflicting counsels constantly conspired to excite.

Hooker at once set to work to account for the enormous disparity in the number of troops furnished the Army of the Potomac, and the number actually effective for battle, a matter that had caused President Lincoln the greatest solicitude



while McClellan commanded it. He strove to prevent desertion and disciplined the various divisions until after three months of administrative and tactical exercise he boasted that he had "the finest army on the planet."

The country, always impatient for action, demanded another forward movement. The army rested beside the Rappahannock, and the desire for a crossing was still felt. The lessons of Fredericksburg had been learned, and a *détour* by way of some unguarded point was now proposed and executed. The president eagerly followed the movement. The entire army was thrown across the river to the great surprise of the Confederates, at a point far up the stream where there was no expectation of it. The opposing forces met in a forest springing out of a dense jungle of undergrowth, in the early days of May, 1863, and but for a display of costly indecision by General Hooker at critical moments, and a forced march and flank attack by "Stonewall" Jackson, the engagement would have undoubtedly resulted in Union success. This was the battle of Chancellorsville, a severe contest fought without any kind of intelligent or alert direction on the Northern side, one more reverse to increase the burden of President Lincoln's distress at Washington. The Army of the Potomac recrossed the river in safety, having sustained a loss of more than 17,000 men. The Confederates also suffered severely, but all their disasters combined did not compare in cost to the

misadventure by which "Stonewall" Jackson was mortally shot by his own troops while deploying a body of them in the darkness on the evening of the 2d of May.

The Confederates were now not unnaturally in a state of great elation, and the cry of "On to Richmond," in the North, was drowned with the Southern shout of "On to Washington." In spite of the loss of Jackson, which was keenly felt, the South, after its recent victories, felt a certain degree of invincibility that made it bold in its designs and courageous in the determination rapidly to put them into execution. Many felt that Hooker's day was done, and that he must make way for another general. But he was still threatening to cross the river again and avenge himself on Lee, when there was unimpeachable information that the Southern army had put itself in motion for a daring invasion of the North. The leaders boasted that their horses would soon drink from the Susquehanna and the Delaware. They would ravage the rich farms of Pennsylvania, plant the standard of revolt in "My Maryland," which might yet "spurn the Northern scum," capture Harrisburg and Philadelphia, and returning encompass and seize Washington. The Richmond newspapers announced that the Southern purpose was to cut the lines of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Following that they nourished a chimerical scheme for setting fire to the anthracite coal mines which it was argued would deprive the

North of fuel, thus everywhere stopping the wheels of industry and transportation.

Hooker's first reckless impulse was to direct his army toward Richmond and take Secessia's capital while Lee was absent. To this venturesome and romantic design Lincoln interposed positive objections, and instructed the Union commander to follow the Confederate army and contest its progress at every point. Hooker performed his part in this movement with courage, celerity and intelligence. He was on the inside of the arc, and his cavalry incessantly annoyed the Southern flank until Lee crossed the river, and with his hosts swept into Pennsylvania, for the first and last time in the war, pitching his tents upon free soil. Militiamen, hastily gathered together in the threatened states, came to meet him, while farmers and villagers and their families fled in affright in all directions.

On the eve of this great crisis, Hooker, who during the advance had done a good deal to retrieve his damaged fortunes, offered his resignation, the culmination of a long series of unpleasant passages with General Halleck. The president used his good offices to restore peace, but as Hooker was being hoist by his own petard, being criticised openly by his subordinates, notably by General Meade, and there was no time for discussing the matter, he was promptly relieved from duty. He had withheld his confidence from Burnside and taken that general's place; now by the same rule, Meade being the critic, Hooker left the high post in favor of

the dissatisfied subordinate. The president, advising with his Secretary of War, had acted with admirable decision. It was argued that in addition to being an efficient general, possessed of ideas for the conduct of an army, Meade was a Pennsylvanian who would feel a pride in defending his own state against a dangerous invader, and that action so decided would put an end to the aspirations of General McClellan's partisans, still stubbornly insisting that if the Union were to be saved, their superlative leader must be called back to his old place.<sup>1</sup> This was on the 28th day of June, 1863. The transfer was effected without disturbance to the morale of the army, or interference with the execution of the general plan of campaign which had been formulated by Hooker.

General Lee was preparing to march upon Harrisburg when word reached him that the Army of the Potomac had crossed into Maryland, moving northward in a fan-shaped concentrated force. The question of advance or retreat must now be decided by a battle which it was foreseen would be one of the great encounters of the war. The movement at once diverted Lee's attention from the Susquehanna, his raiding expeditions were called in, and the meeting was soon inevitably set for the hills and ridges encircling the little south Pennsylvania town of Gettysburg. The Confederate general chose the place, since it was the centre for many important roads that he would soon need to

<sup>1</sup> "Reminiscences of A. Lincoln," p. 129.

use in one direction or another. On the first day of July the battle began ; the issue was decided on the third when Lee, convinced of the necessity of a retreat to his old battle-grounds, carried his stores, prisoners and guns with him in a leisurely way to the river, which, being in flood, he was unable immediately to cross. The Federal army offered no menace to his movement. Meade, satisfied with his achievement, although without knowledge of the importance of the victory, telegraphed jubilantly about "driving the invaders from our soil," an echo of the boastful utterance that escaped McClellan as he rested upon his laurels at Antietam when the Confederate army had once before crossed the Potomac.

Lincoln hoped and expected that Lee would not be permitted to return to Virginia. He hung over the telegraph instruments in Washington devouring the news. "Drive the invaders from our soil!" he exclaimed in tones of anguish, his hands falling upon his knees. "Drive the invaders from our soil! My God! Is that all?" It is all "our soil," observed the president in his distress. Again and again he urged Meade to overtake the Confederate army, and his days and nights were passed in the greatest anxiety, only to be assured at the end of his time of waiting that by dilatoriness and confusion of counsels it had been allowed to escape to friendly ground, where it must again be pursued with more troops, costing more money, more life and more time. "I do not believe you appreciate the magnitude of the

misfortune involved in Lee's escape," said Lincoln to Meade, in one of those fatherly letters which even the greatest of his generals frequently received, although this one was never sent. "He was within your easy grasp, and to have closed upon him would in connection with our other late successes have ended the war. As it is the war will be prolonged indefinitely. If you could not safely attack Lee last Monday, how can you possibly do so south of the river? . . . Your golden opportunity is gone, and I am distressed immeasurably because of it." <sup>1</sup> Meade had "expended all the skill and toil and blood up to the ripe harvest," said the president to General O. O. Howard, "and then let the crop go to waste." <sup>2</sup>

In the meantime the Federal cause was again to be invigorated by some brilliant feats of arms in the West, which in a little while gave an entirely new complexion to the operations of the Army of the Potomac, bringing forward the generals who were to terminate the war. Cool, methodical and soldier-like, except for his intemperance, Grant had yet done little to presage his future career. His operations were by no means futile, but there was what seemed to Lincoln and other distant spectators in Washington, a great deal of aimless movement hither and thither, which might or might not in the end prove of practical avail. By the capture of Fort Donelson early in 1862, followed by his part

<sup>1</sup> "Speeches," Vol. II, p. 369.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 373.

in the victory at Shiloh, his name was brought forward prominently. General Halleck's coming to Washington left him the man in principal command in the West, and the opportunity was now offered him to gain that distinction which led to his elevation to the highest place in the gift of Congress and the president. His object was to clear the Mississippi, which was free above Vicksburg and which, since the capture of New Orleans, was in Federal control south of Port Hudson. Here was a distance of two hundred miles still open to the traffic of the Confederates. Without hindrance they were crossing this belt to the great area, which was the principal source of supply for their grain and beef, and they were determined to hold the important watercourse and their highways to the Southwest. The North, on its side, realized that if it could once control the river and split the Confederacy into separate parts, the military task would be greatly simplified, and by slow attrition, if by no other means, the cotton country supported by Virginia would be subdued through the stopping up of the sources of its food.

Grant, by patient pursuit of his object, which was the reduction of Vicksburg, strongly fortified and garrisoned, had taken the steps preliminary to his advance upon the city. He aimed at first to carry the works by assault, but his attempts were so unsuccessful that he settled himself for a prolonged siege. His force, having been increased, he closely invested the place and by sapping and

mining and skilful gunnery brought the final day nearer and nearer without risk of opposition from any body of troops on the outside formidable enough to cause him uneasiness. The citizens and the garrison were at last in sore straits for the necessaries of life, and the outlook being hopeless, on the very day Pickett's brave chargers were sent reeling back from the stone wall at Gettysburg, July 3d, the city was asking for terms. General Grant's reply was "unconditional surrender." About 30,000 men laid down their arms, and Vicksburg passed into Union hands, henceforward to remain securely in Federal possession. A few days later Port Hudson surrendered to Banks, and it really seemed as though the turning point in the war had been reached at last. On the 16th of July a vessel laden with merchandise arrived at New Orleans direct from St. Louis, having passed over the entire route unchallenged. Lincoln could now frame his famous boast that the Mississippi again went "unvexed to the sea," and writing to Grant, whom he did not remember ever to have met personally, he made "grateful acknowledgment" of "the almost inestimable service" which that general of rising fortunes had done his country.

The next task of importance in the West was to take the Confederates in hand in eastern Tennessee, and Grant's genius was soon actively employed in that field. Rosecrans had been operating for some time at the head of the Army of the Cumberland in the design of freeing the country of the enemy, the



capture of Chattanooga being the special object in contemplation. This was admitted to be a very difficult undertaking, and the general was a rather unreliable and obstreperous man who had many of the defects of McClellan in never being ready to move. He forfeited his respect with Halleck and the authorities in Washington by the tone of his dispatches, but performed a feat of the greatest strategic importance in forcing Bragg to evacuate Chattanooga without a fight in 1863. Rosecrans reported the foe in flight and firmly believed that he had won a bloodless victory, of which idea he was entirely disabused when the Confederates in great bodies massed themselves for battle on a field of their own choosing at Chickamauga. Here, in one of the fiercest engagements, in spite of the individual gallantry of General Thomas, who stood like a rock against every assault upon his position, Rosecrans met a disastrous reverse, and was compelled to withdraw to the city, where the enemy practically besieged him for many weeks, his only lines of communication being through difficult mountain passes.

The president was in great anxiety lest Rosecrans would be compelled to surrender the city and resign all the advantages which had been won by a long, onerous and costly campaign. The general himself was despondent to the last degree, his state of mind being reflected in his messages to the War Department. In October, Secretary Stanton made a journey west on the president's advice and arranged

a personal meeting at Louisville with the hero of Vicksburg. Upon this occasion Grant was presented with an order creating the new military department of the Mississippi and appointing him commander-in-chief of the division, thus concentrating under one control the three older departments of the Ohio, the Cumberland and the Tennessee.

It was left with Grant to decide whether Thomas should supersede Rosecrans at Chattanooga. This point required no great amount of discussion in the mind of the new commander. Thomas was immediately raised to Rosecrans' place. Grant put himself in motion at once for the critical point, and made such disposition of the troops in the vicinity that they would assist in forwarding his plans for the early relief of the city. It was not long before the necessary arrangements were complete for the most brilliant victory of the war, and one of the most picturesque and singular military engagements fought anywhere upon a modern battle-field. The battle "above the clouds," on Lookout Mountain, over whose top a bank of mist had settled to obscure the movements of the troops from spectators below, and the irresistible sweep of the Federal regiments over the Confederate trenches and up the slopes of Missionary Ridge, bristling with guns and serried with rifle-pits, bringing thousands of Southern prisoners inside the Union lines to be shelled by their own batteries, will long serve to quicken the pulses of the most sluggish

reader of history. Here Grant, Sherman and Sheridan fought together for the first time and built the foundations for that mutual feeling of respect and trust which operated so powerfully to Federal advantage in the last year of the war.

Undoubtedly one reason for the Confederates' inglorious failure to resist the Union advance on Missionary Ridge was the withdrawal of Longstreet, with a portion of the investing forces, for an attack upon Knoxville, just as that able and resolute general's coming had been responsible for many of the brilliant performances of the Southern army in the battle of Chickamauga. It was President Lincoln's favorite design to drive the Confederates from east Tennessee, both because the hill country there was populated by many loyal Union families, and because it contained some of the most important subsistence depots of the enemy and was the seat of nitre beds, used for the manufacture of gunpowder. If this section could be captured and held the South would be, in Mr. Lincoln's apt phrase, "like an animal with a thorn in its vitals." The overwhelming triumph of Grant at Chattanooga quickly gave affairs a better appearance at Knoxville. Longstreet was compelled, after a sanguinary assault, to withdraw his forces, and Tennessee was relatively free from molestation from the Confederate armies during the ensuing winter.

Meade, at the head of the army of the Potomac having allowed Lee to escape in safety after Gettys-

burg, added nothing to Federal glories in the autumn or winter, but there was abundant cause for, congratulation in the North. Already in August, Mr. Lincoln had written to J. C. Conkling: "The signs look better. The Father of Waters again goes unvexed to the sea. . . . It is hard to say that anything has been more bravely and well done than at Antietam, Murfreesboro, Gettysburg and on many fields of lesser note. Nor must Uncle Sam's web feet be forgotten. At all the watery margins they have been present. Not only on the deep sea, the broad bay and the rapid river, but also up the narrow muddy bayou and wherever the ground was a little damp they have been and made their tracks. Thanks to all, for the great republic, for the principle it lives by and keeps alive—for man's vast future—thanks to all. Peace does not appear so distant as it did. I hope it will come soon and come to stay; and so come as to be worth the keeping in all future time."

The year 1862 had gone out in a blaze of Confederate triumphs; as the year 1863 faded from view the balance was clearly on the Northern side. The victories at Chattanooga following upon his feat at Vicksburg had directed all eyes to General Grant, and on the 26th day of February, 1864, the president approving three days later, a bill passed Congress reviving the grade of lieutenant-general for "that major-general most distinguished for courage, skill and ability," who being designated by the president would take command of all the

armies of the United States. This description fitted no other except Grant. He was at once nominated for the post, confirmed by the Senate and directed to report at the War Office in Washington. On the 8th of March, he arrived in the capital; formally received his new commission from the president's hands; unlike all his predecessors in high military office since the war had begun, avoided all social attention, even declining to attend a dinner to which he was invited by Mrs. Lincoln on the ground that his business called him away; made a hasty trip to settle his affairs in connection with the Western army, and returning to Washington with a tooth brush as his sole article of personal impedimenta, took his place at once at the head of the troops in Virginia. The Army of the Potomac was now large, strong and well seasoned, and that body of troops which opposed it was of diminishing efficiency through the loss of the flower of its regiments in the disastrous invasion of Pennsylvania. What it chiefly needed was a vigorous leader and that it was now to have in abundant measure.

Never was the commander of a great army in a great war confronted by difficulties such as those that had beset the pathway of President Lincoln. Without a trained body of fighting men it was necessary to assemble them and conduct the campaigns with due regard for democratic systems of government. The Southern leaders, having no traditions to maintain, might organize an oligarchy,

as they virtually did, and conduct the war with the important advantage of autocratic management. Once embarked for the contest, if they did not win it, the treatment reserved for traitors was felt to be their certain fate, for which reason the end justified questionable methods. Lincoln on the other hand had a constitution to obey, traditions to respect and millions of men universally enfranchised to consult at stated periods of time. He must feel his way very carefully. There were large bodies of Northern people ready to criticise and repudiate his acts and they, through the ballot box, might become as potent a factor to embarrass his plans as the Confederate army. But he gained strength and courage as the war progressed. He suspended the writ of habeas corpus, the draft and conscription system was resorted to for the recruitment of the army that could no longer be reinforced with sufficient speed by volunteers, although the policy led to dangerous riots, and policies were perforce adopted which were the subject of much bitter contention. The government came to be known in hostile quarters as the "Washington despotism," but it continued to gather power without which nothing of great value could have been effected.

The great curse of the service was the system of civilian appointments. West Point could not supply enough practiced men to command the troops and even its graduates were not always virtuous exemplars for other men. Abolitionists,

explorers, lawyers and politicians suddenly became generals to criticise each other, the general-in-chief, the president and Congress. They conferred with politicians in their camps, composed and despatched political letters and directed campaigns with a mind for partisan consequences. Generals resigned when juniors were put in command over their heads, eastern dandies would not willingly fight for western commanders; and the service was in a state of disgraceful chaos as measured by the standards of military organization in European countries. Grant came upon the scene to put an end to all such absurdities although it must be said in fairness to his immediate predecessor that recent wholesome leadership and experience of war had already made the Army of the Potomac a more efficient military body than ever before.

The country had had no lieutenant-general since Washington. It was now very clear, as a complimentary spectator declared that, while "Washington made the country, Grant was making it over again and putting in all the modern improvements."

No more did newsboys vend their journals to the soldiers in the midst of battle, and no more did the Confederates when they captured a Federal depot of stores feast upon oranges, lemons, jam, white and brown sugar, eggs preserved in salt, and the useless luxuries that McClellan provided for his soldiers. It was now war in grim earnest and on a gigantic scale. Severe discipline prevailed, recreancy of duty was punished by shooting at sight,

and the Army of the Potomac purged of its pride, rid of its prejudices in favor of one or another leader, sullen, but obedient and determined, went forward to accomplish its mission. Six generals had led it against Richmond—McDowell, McClellan, Pope, Burnside, Hooker and Meade, all by different routes. None had approached so near the seat of government of the Confederacy as McClellan in the first year of the war. Now Grant came to command, and by personal equanimity and soldierly tactics, slowly and at great cost, but none the less surely, led his army up to the city so long the object of Federal desire.



## CHAPTER X

### THE SLAVE IN THE WAR

IN looking back upon the war, the events that preceded it and those which ensued, it seems so clear that the leading object of the struggle was the abolition of slavery, it is difficult to understand the curious manner in which the issue was concealed while the struggle was in progress. It was at the moment most positively not a war for the negro. Upon that issue troops could not have been enlisted and battles could not have been won, a fact that none knew so well as that shrewd political observer, Abraham Lincoln. It is by no means certain that he would have undertaken such a war himself with more than a small part of the zeal popularly ascribed to him as the emancipator. It was no well-defined purpose, long cherished, that gave the slave his freedom, but chance and the inevitable drift of political events. It is true that Lincoln did much to guide the movement on its course, but it was only the determined resistance of the Southern people to all proposals for their return to the Union, which led to emancipation at that particular period in our national history. Mr. Lincoln was little prepossessed on this question when it was balanced against the larger question of preserving the Union.

He had none of those predilections of the Abolitionists for whom the war was an anti-slavery war. He could not say with Garrison : "This Union is a lie ; the American Union is a sham, an imposture, a covenant with death, an agreement with hell," so long as human bondage continued to exist within the borders of the republic. The negro was suffering in his shackles and would be allowed still to suffer unless they might be struck from him by accident, as a matter of military expediency.

The negroes, as the Federal troops moved over the Potomac into Virginia, welcomed them as "Bobolitionists," but not many of the Northern soldiers felt that they were brothers come to release the blacks from slavery. In the early years of the war, if accounts do not err, during the entire period McClellan commanded the Army of the Potomac, "John Brown's Body" was a forbidden air among the regimental bands. The Hutchinsons were driven from Union camps for singing abolition songs, and in so far as the Northern army interested itself at all in the slavery question, it was by the use of force to return to their Southern masters fugitives seeking shelter in Union lines. While the information they possessed, especially respecting the roads and means of communication, if they were not to be employed as laborers or armed as soldiers, should have been of inestimable service to the Federals, the North avoided the appearance of a desire to raise the negroes from the plane of chattels to the rank of human beings. A loyal white man would

have been welcomed to the army ; the loyal black man was sent back to continue his unrequited toil for a strong enemy. From both sides, from those who would let the negro alone, and those who would place a musket in his hands and fight battles with the express purpose of destroying slavery, the most urgent and angry representations came to the president. The rage of the Abolitionists because Mr. Lincoln had not emancipated the slaves instantly was intense. Their heroes were John C. Fremont and John Brown. To Wendell Phillips the president was "a first-rate second-rate man." In 1862 at a public meeting in Washington he spoke as follows :

"Gentlemen of Washington ! you have spent for us two million dollars per day. You bury two regiments a month, two thousand men by disease without a battle. You rob every laboring man of one-half of his pay for the next thirty years by your taxes. You place the curse of intolerable taxation on every cradle for the next generation. What do you give us in return ? What is the other side of the balance sheet ? The North has poured out its blood and money like water ; it has leveled every fence of constitutional privilege, and Abraham Lincoln sits to-day a more unlimited despot than the world knows this side of China. What does he render the North for this unbounded confidence ? Show us something, or I tell you that within two years the indignant reaction of the people will hurl the cabinet in contempt from their

seats, and the devils that went out from yonder capital, for there has been no sweeping or garnishing, will come back seven times stronger, for I do not believe that Jefferson Davis, driven down to the Gulf, will go down to the waters and perish as certain brutes mentioned in the Gospel did."

Such language represents one extreme of opinion held in the loyal states which Mr. Lincoln was compelled to reckon with; the other extreme is typified in the remark of the Baltimore woman to an Englishman that if she and a few of her friends could catch Wendell Phillips, they would break every bone in his body. The border state newspapers prescribed a punishment for him and Garrison no less severe than that to be meted out to Davis and Floyd. The Nashville *Union*, the organ of Andrew Johnson, the military governor of Tennessee, denounced Phillips as a "flashy, blasphemous incendiary and half crazed Jacobin, as vile a disunionist as Jeff Davis or William L. Yancey."

The question, which as we now clearly perceive was the war's principal cause, could not be permanently put aside. General Benjamin F. Butler who has been called the Yankee Danton since he lived by that Frenchman's rule, "l'audace, l'audace toujours l'audace," had already taken the initial step in Virginia. Three slaves came to him while he was in command at Fort Monroe in May, 1861. Their owner demanded their return under the provisions of the fugitive slave law. As Virginia had publicly declared herself to be a part of the

Union no longer, Butler rather humorously suggested that the master could not enjoy the benefits of a United States law unless he should first take an oath of allegiance. Many negro slaves were being impressed by the Confederate commanders for digging trenches and building batteries, and Butler soon declared them "contraband of war" and therefore confiscable. By the first of August he had not less than nine hundred negroes usefully employed in and around the fort.

This idea was regarded as a very happy one. Released slaves were soon everywhere in the North known as "contrabands." General Butler had no authority but his own for this action. Nevertheless the president did not repudiate the policy, although he was early obliged openly to disavow the intention of becoming an emancipator. His first and most pronounced utterance in this sense accompanied his repeal of the order by which Fremont in Missouri in August, 1861, had declared free the slaves of all persons taking part in rebellion in the district under his military control. To such negroes, certificates of freedom would be issued from his headquarters. This measure in the light of later events, seems to have been very far from unreasonable, and it met the enthusiastic approval of large numbers of people in the Northern states. At Washington the order was accepted as a mere political manifesto. It was well ahead of the average state of public opinion at the time. Congress had very lately passed a confiscation act

which legitimized the seizure of slaves used by their owners in aid of Confederate military operations, and General Fremont, to the deep disgust of the Abolitionists, was instructed to modify his policy until it should conform with the terms of that law. Beyond a doubt the rescission of this ill considered order was expedient and necessary, since an entire company of volunteers had thrown down their arms upon receiving the news from Missouri. Kentucky was on the point of seceding, and if she should go, President Lincoln thought it only a question of weeks, or perhaps days, when Maryland and Missouri would take their departure also.<sup>1</sup> Popular sentiment was expressed in these homely verses of a humorist :

“ To the flag we are pledged, all its foes we abhor,  
And we ain't for the nigger, but are for the war.”

The excitement in Fremont's district had scarcely subsided, when the question assumed a very ugly appearance in the South. The seacoast expeditions, notably the movement against Port Royal, brought large bodies of slaves into the Federal camps. The owners had fled and the negroes, left to their own devices, found themselves helpless and destitute inside the Union lines. Mr. Cameron had written, printed and put into the mails his first report as Secretary of War in December, 1861, without consultation with the president, it was believed, stealthily and in full knowledge that his recom-

<sup>1</sup> Nicolay and Hay, Vol. IV, p. 422.

mendations would be disapproved. With Port Royal in mind he recommended the general arming of negroes, declaring that the Federals had as clear a right to employ slaves taken from the enemy as to use captured gunpowder. The pamphlets were recalled by the president by telegraph, when their contents came to his notice, and the statements of the secretary were modified in a material way, though not without creating some unpleasantness in his family of official advisers.

Despite the president's vigilance, General David Hunter, who was rapidly extending the sphere of his control on the coast line of Georgia, South Carolina and Florida, was about to follow the very unwholesome example of Fremont. On the 9th of May, 1862, he issued an order on his sole personal responsibility declaring that, "slavery and martial law in a free country are altogether incompatible. The persons in these three states—Georgia, Florida and South Carolina—heretofore held as slaves are therefore declared forever free." Lincoln repudiated this order immediately, and in the most positive terms. Secretary Chase, who intervened in Hunter's behalf, was informed by the president that "no commanding general shall do such a thing upon my responsibility without consulting me," and a proclamation was issued publicly declaring the order void and of no effect. "I further make it known," the president continued, "that whether it be competent for me as commander-in-chief of the army and navy to de-

clare the slaves of any state or states free, and whether at any time in any case it shall have become a necessity indispensable to the maintenance of the government to exercise such a supposed power, are questions which under my responsibility I reserve to myself and which I cannot feel justified in leaving to the decision of commanders in the field."

Hunter did not content himself with the emancipation of the negro; he gave his attention also to the employment of the freedmen in the quartermaster's department and to arming them. He had unavailingly appealed to Washington for reinforcements, and thereupon began to organize the "South Carolina Regiments of Colored Infantry." No one could be found to command the negroes after they were accoutred. They were the objects of ridicule by the white soldiers beside whom they were to fight, and the general who soon came to be known as "Black" David Hunter was compelled to assign his own nephew to the new contingent.<sup>1</sup>

Hunter's course was generally and acrimoniously discussed in the Northern newspapers, and by the people at large, who had already declared that they would not fight "for the nigger"; they added now that they would not fight "with the nigger." Congress asked the Secretary of War for information concerning the episode, and Mr. Stanton referred the question to Hunter, who replied that his experiment had been "a complete and even marvel-

<sup>1</sup> Charles G. Halpine, "Baked Meats," p. 176.



ous success," contriving to write so tactful and amusing a letter about fugitive slaves and "fugitive masters," that his critics were effectually discomfited. Nevertheless the arming of negroes at Port Royal led to no important immediate result, and the blacks, fearing that they were to be used as buffers for white soldiers and taken in captivity to Cuba, were no more enamored of slavery under Hunter and Lincoln, than under Jefferson Davis. The setbacks were only temporary, however, and the movement gained headway steadily. Butler organized colored regiments at New Orleans, and commanders in Kansas followed what had at first seemed to be a daring example. Lincoln, rather wary, although always observant of the changing directions of public opinion, soon gave the proposal his earnest encouragement, and as early as in May, 1863, a special bureau was established in connection with the War Department to supervise the recruitment of colored troops. In December, 1863, there were 50,000 negroes under arms and when the war closed nearly 125,000 were employed in different branches of the service in the Federal uniform.

The Confederates furiously denounced the arming of the negroes. The *Savannah Republican* denounced Hunter as "the cold-blooded abolition miscreant, who from his headquarters at Hilton Head, is engaged in executing the bloody and savage behests of the imperial gorilla who, from his throne of human bones at Washington, rules, reigns and riots

over the destinies of the brutish and degraded North." The officers in command of black troops were branded as outlaws. If they were captured they were to be treated, not as prisoners of war, but as common felons to be hanged to trees and telegraph poles. To be killed by a negro was to the Southern cavaliers the most opprobrious of deaths. To be shot by the Irish and Germans, the hirelings of the Northern city slums, was sufficiently humiliating, but for masters to face armed bodies of their former slaves who, a generation or two before, had been savages in Africa, and were still not better than horses in South Carolina, was a violation, it was gravely alleged, of the rules of civilized warfare. When they came into contact with the Confederates in battle, the negro soldiers were often treated with needless severity. The fire of the enemy was likely to be concentrated upon the black battalions when their commanders put them forward in a military movement, and negroes taken on the field, suffered indignities and cruelties in imprisonment which promptly aroused the resentment of Northern Abolitionists. Frederick Douglass, who was conveyed to the White House in the president's carriage "to take tea," appealed in behalf of his fellow blacks. If they served in the Federal uniform and were captured, he said that they should receive the treatment accorded to prisoners of war. It is certain that in some brutal instances, as at Fort Pillow, no quarter was given, and negroes were killed in cold blood. The presi-

dent was unwilling to retaliate, alleging that he never could be an instrument to punish innocent men for crimes committed by guilty ones out of his reach. Nevertheless, he was induced to issue an order on July 30, 1863, commanding "that for every soldier of the United States killed in violation of the laws of war, a rebel soldier shall be executed ; and for every one enslaved by the enemy or sold into slavery, a rebel soldier shall be placed at hard labor on the public works, and continued at such labor until the other shall be released, and receive the treatment due to a prisoner of war."

Singularly enough it was not a long time until the Southern leaders seriously proposed to arm the negroes for use in the Confederate army, having exhausted their resources in other directions, when the Northern policy must have seemed somewhat less violative of the laws of polite warfare. In the North, too, where the draft was being resorted to and men were taken off to war unwillingly, the business of slaughter being reduced to scientific precision, there was a diminishing disposition to inquire who was wearing the uniform and carrying Federal guns. Private Miles O'Reilly gave expression to a thought that had taken hold of large numbers of men :

"Some say it is a burnin' shame  
To make the naysgurs fight,  
An' that the thrade o' bein' kilt  
Belongs but to the white ;

But as for me 'upon me sowl'  
So liberal are we here,  
I'll let Sambo be murdered in place o' meself  
On every day in the year."

To the demand that the negro regiments be disbanded, which was incorporated in the Democratic platform of 1864, Mr. Lincoln responded that he would not and could not be a party to such a transaction. "You say you will not fight to free negroes," he wrote to one who had criticised the policy. "Some of them seem willing to fight for you." They make themselves useful, he observed, in assisting Union prisoners to escape, and in holding territory and posts abandoned by the enemy, especially in hot and sickly neighborhoods. Southern success, "if you fling the compulsory labor of millions of black men into their side of the scale," the president believed to be inevitable. Should these soldiers be returned to slavery, he remarked with some force, "I should deserve to be damned in time and eternity."

In the same way public opinion in the North upon the question of emancipation was undergoing a material transformation. Lincoln was not a step behind the people, if he did not already lead them. He at first stopped short of the policy he was pleased afterward to adopt, and lingered long over the proposal for compensated emancipation. The Abolitionists were indisposed to assist him, even in the discussion of such a proposition. Their senti-

ments had been expressed by Hinton Rowan Helper. "Preposterous idea!" he exclaimed. "Shall we pat the bloodhounds for the sake of doing them a favor? Shall we fee the curs of slavery to make them rich at our expense? Pay these whelps for the privilege of converting them into decent, honest, upright men?"

Already in November, President Lincoln had made a proposal to Delaware for gradual emancipation, with the assistance of the Federal government. By the census of 1860, that little state was accredited with 1,798 slaves which, valued at \$400 each would be worth \$719,200. It was suggested that if Delaware would take this amount in six per cent. bonds of the United States, payable in thirty-one equal annual instalments, and free all her slaves in thirty-one years, or by New Year's day, 1893, a difficult problem would be satisfactorily solved. The pro-slavery men in the Delaware legislature indignantly rejected the proposition, and declared that when they wished to extinguish their institution they would do it upon their own motion and in their own way.

In his first annual message to Congress in December, 1861, the president presented his views more formally, although he had still not reduced them to a definite system. He expressed the wish that the slaves who were coming into the Union camps to complicate the purely military problem, should be accepted from the states, "according to some mode of valuation in lieu, *pro tanto*, of

direct taxes," and emancipated. At the same time he urged that arrangements be concluded for the colonization of the slaves as well as the free colored people, "at some place or places in a climate congenial to them." At the moment his mind was directed to Liberia and Hayti, to which negro states he desired that the United States should accredit diplomatic representatives, but he also had in prospect the acquisition of Southern continental territory by purchase in some such way as Louisiana had been added to the American domain.

These recommendations having fallen upon unfruitful ground, the president sent a special message to Congress on March 6, 1862. He urged the passage of a joint resolution by both houses to this effect: "*Resolved*, That the United States ought to cooperate with any state which may adopt gradual abolishment of slavery, giving to such state pecuniary aid to be used by such state in its discretion to compensate for the inconveniences, public and private, produced by such change of system."

A few days later, a number of congressmen from the border states came to the executive mansion for an interview with the president, on which occasion he aimed to clear their minds of some of their prejudices against emancipation, but with very indifferent success. He explained that slavery was a state institution, and no state could be compelled to do in regard to it that which was against its will. But slaves were coming into the Union camps;

their owners complained and protested, and irritation from this source was increasing so rapidly, that it threatened serious results. A congressman from Maryland said that his state would be willing to give up the system, if the people were paid for their negroes, and could get rid of the race with which, in a condition of freedom, they were not inclined to live. Mr. Lincoln declared that his double policy of compensation and colonization answered these objections, and there could be no coercion while he was in the White House, which he would be for three years yet, unless he should be "expelled by the act of God or the Confederate armies."

/ In April, the resolution passed both houses of Congress, and the president, as he signed it, was filled with hope that its recommendations would be heeded. Those who antagonized the measure on the ground of expense, were asked to remember that the cost of the war was two millions of dollars *per diem*. What must be expended to prosecute it for less than twelve hours, if applied to the new purpose, would free all the slaves in Delaware. In Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri and the District of Columbia, where there were 432,622 slaves, the price of purchase and emancipation at \$400 each would be \$173,048,800, a sum not in excess of what the government was sinking and wasting in war in eighty-seven days.

But the border states made no response to the invitation contained in the resolution. A law of

positive value was enacted by Congress a little later, when the work of the Compromises of 1850 was completed, and slavery was abolished in the District of Columbia. There were still 3,181 slaves in the capital of the United States, and setting a good example to the states Congress offered to pay the owners at the rate of \$300 per head. In the same bill \$100,000 were appropriated to encourage the emigration of negroes to Liberia and Hayti.

General Hunter's emancipation proclamation was timed rudely to interrupt the negotiations with the border state leaders, and Mr. Lincoln took occasion on May 19th, in repudiating the action of that commander to put in another plea for his scheme for freedom with compensation. "The change it contemplates," he observed, "would come gently as the dews of heaven, not rending or wrecking anything. Will you not embrace it? So much good has not been done by one effort in all past time, as in the providence of God, it is now your high privilege to do." There was still no motion in the border states seriously to consider, much less to adopt, the recommendations of the president, and on July 12, 1862, he again appealed to their congressmen. "How much better for you and for your people," said he, "to take the step which at once shortens the war and secures substantial compensation for that which is sure to be wholly lost in any other event. How much better to thus save the money, which else we sink forever in war. How much better to do it while we can, lest the war, ere long,



render us pecuniarily unable to do it." He was now suggesting the establishment of negro colonies in South America, but his appeals again fell upon deaf ears, and but a small number of men in the state congressional delegations went to their homes with sympathetic intention of exerting their influence in behalf of emancipation. The line of division that Lincoln had remarked many years before in his discussion of the question with Southern men, was still clearly defined. "You think slavery right while I think it wrong," he was wont to say, and neither side, even in the states still loyal parts of the same Union, had yet abated very much of the faith that was in them on this question.

As the prospect of further accessions to the Confederacy by the secession of the border states diminished, Missouri, Kentucky and Maryland being made secure by the movements of the Federal armies, and the temper of New England and the urgent demands of religious bodies in all parts of the North came to reinforce the insistency of the old line Abolitionists, Lincoln felt his way carefully toward general emancipation as a military policy. For long he doubted his constitutional right to make the slaves free. He correctly argued that a mere declaration that they were free would not make them free. He likened the act, with his characteristic facility in allusion to the case of the boy who, when asked how many legs his calf would have if he called the tail a leg, replied five, to

which the natural response was that calling a tail a leg did not make it a leg. "I do not want to issue a document that the whole world will see must necessarily be inoperative like the Pope's bull against the comet," he told the spokesman for a large body of black-coated clerics, who sought audience of him on the subject in 1862. But he continued with that pious faith in his mission, which was sometimes characteristic of him, "the subject is on my mind by day and night, more than any other, and whatever shall appear to be God's will I will do."

Greeley, in the meantime, had fussed himself into a state of great uneasiness lest the war would be finished without advantage to the negro. He had discharged an editorial broadside at the president through the *Tribune* in August, 1862, which drew a letter from Mr. Lincoln, and brought the editor to Washington. "If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them," said Lincoln in language that no man could misconstrue. "If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also

do that. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union ; and what I forbear, I forbear, because I do not believe it would help to save the Union.”<sup>1</sup>

“Suppose I do that,” said Lincoln to Greeley when the editor in conversation defended a proposal for general emancipation. “There are now 20,000 of our muskets on the shoulders of Kentuckians who are bravely fighting our battles. Every one of them will be thrown down or carried over to the rebels.”

“Let them do it,” said Greeley. “The cause of the Union will be stronger if Kentucky should secede with the rest, than it is now.”

“Oh, I can’t think that,” remarked Lincoln, as he concluded the discussion, at the same moment pondering in his own mind’s sanctuary the measure that he had long resisted, and was now very soon at the ripe time to adopt and make the central act of his administration.

The first draft of the emancipation proclamation was written upon four half sheets of official foolscap paper, on board the steamboat, as the president was returning from his visit to McClellan in the Peninsula. That general in a letter to Lincoln, dated July 7, 1862, had advised the president very freely as to what must and must not be done for the common weal. He was convinced, for example, that the “forcible abolition of slavery should not be contemplated for a moment,” and asserted that

<sup>1</sup> “Speeches,” Vol. II, p. 227.

“a declaration of radical views especially upon slavery will rapidly disintegrate our present armies,” without in any manner interrupting the steady and logical flow of events, all the time leading the president nearer and nearer to that step, deliberately taken, by which the negroes in all the seceded states were proclaimed free men.

While the president reiterated that “the salvation of the nation was of vastly more consequence than the destruction of slavery,” and that the task, if he should live to complete it, for which posterity would venerate his administration, would be the suppression of the rebellion and not emancipation, he was rapidly coming to the point where he could regard the liberation of the slaves as a necessary war measure. He coolly weighed the good and evil consequences of his act, viewed solely as an agency in bringing the war to an end, independent of moral considerations. He knew that many would regard a proclamation emancipating the slaves as a surrender to the Abolitionists. His party would lose some elections and a few generals and soldiers. The South would amalgamate more closely and fight more stubbornly when the war was avowedly conducted against property. “My friends pretend I am now carrying on this war for the sole purpose of abolition,” said the president to Governor Randall of Wisconsin. “So long as I am president it shall be carried on for the sole purpose of restoring the Union. But no human power can subdue this trouble without the use of the

emancipation policy and every other policy calculated to weaken the moral and physical forces of the rebellion."

To those who blamed him for tardiness, he said that they forgot his oath to obey the constitution and the laws. Slavery was a state institution, which he could not touch until all other measures for the restoration of the Union had failed. He believed that the paramount idea of the constitution was the preservation in perpetuity of the government which had been created by it. In this idea he found the mandate for his action. If any local institution should threaten the existence of the Union, it must be swept away. Like a surgeon confronted by a patient with a diseased limb he would endeavor to save both man and limb, but failing he would sacrifice the limb and save the life. "The moment came," said Mr. Lincoln, "when I felt that slavery must die that the nation might live."

In the president's opinion this moment was at hand in July, 1862, and the emancipation proclamation, as first submitted to the cabinet, stated his intention again to recommend compensated abolishment to the loyal slave states. This was a politic and conciliatory act. The right to slave property was to be recognized in states that were true to the Union; in others the right would be extinguished upon the 1st of January, 1863. The paper was seriously discussed by the president's ministers. Some feared that the step would have disastrous

consequences, while others pressed for early action, believing that it had already been too long delayed. Mr. Seward, since the Federal armies had lately suffered so many reverses, urged a postponement of the measure, lest it be regarded as "a last shriek on the retreat."<sup>1</sup> The force of this objection was obvious. Lincoln, therefore, bided his time until September, aiming meanwhile to bring about a change in the tide of affairs upon the field. "He had promised his God that he would do it," if General Lee were driven back from Maryland,<sup>2</sup> and when McClellan halted the Confederate invasion at Antietam, the president called his cabinet together again, gave the document its final form, and fearlessly issued it. "When Lee came over the river," Lincoln told George S. Boutwell, "I made a resolution that if McClellan drove him back I would send the proclamation after him. The battle of Antietam was fought Wednesday and until Saturday I could not find out whether we had gained a victory or not. It was then too late to issue the proclamation that day, and the fact is I fixed it up a little Sunday, and Monday I let them have it."<sup>3</sup>

This homely description of the events leading up to the promulgation of one of the greatest of all American state documents, has in it more of truth than impressive dignity. On September 22d, as it happened, just one hundred days before the New

<sup>1</sup> Carpenter, "Six Months in the White House," p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>3</sup> "Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln," p. 126.

Year day when the order would become effective, the proclamation was issued. Its most important clauses were as follows :

“That on the first day of January in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any state or designated part of a state, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States shall be then, thenceforward and forever free ; and the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.”

Upon the 24th of September in reply to a serenade at the White House the president said : “I have not been distinctly informed why it is that on this occasion you appear to do me this honor, though I suppose it is because of the proclamation. What I did, I did after a very full deliberation, and under a very heavy and solemn sense of responsibility. I can only trust in God I have made no mistake.”<sup>1</sup> He was not in the hero's mood. He was conscious that the moment was not one for self-congratulation. It was a stroke dealt at the rebellion, and for the time being, at least, must be regarded only as the equivalent of a definite quantity of muskets or gunpowder.

It proved to be, as Lincoln hoped, to quote Gen-

<sup>1</sup> “Speeches,” Vol. II, p. 240.

eral Grant, "the heaviest blow yet given the Confederacy." He did not mean to prosecute the war "with elder stalk squirts charged with rose water." "What I cannot do, of course I will not do," he wrote to Reverdy Johnson, "but it may as well be understood, once for all, that I shall not surrender this game, leaving any available card unplayed." On the 28th of September the president told Hannibal Hamlin that the North was responding to the proclamation "sufficiently in breath but breath kills no rebels."

The measure was not without its anticipated unhappy influence in the autumn elections, but the president abated none of his determination to pursue the policy he had deliberately chosen, and on New Year's day the final order was given, declaring free, forever, the slaves in Arkansas, Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Louisiana, barring certain designated parishes nominally returned to the Union, and Virginia, with exceptions, for the forty-eight counties forming West Virginia and a few other districts, of which the Federals had repossessed themselves by their recent military campaigns. The president declared that the military and naval power of the government would be employed in enforcing the provisions of the proclamation, that negroes formerly enslaved would be received into the armed Federal service, while all were recommended to abstain from violence and secure work for wages wherever it could be found.



“Upon this act,” Mr. Lincoln concluded his famous order, “sincerely believed to be an act of justice warranted by the constitution upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God.”

Lincoln, while still not entirely convinced of the expediency of his course—for with him nothing was certain until after the experience—believed that his action was well timed. Six months earlier, he argued, the country would not have sustained the act. “We have seen this great revolution in public sentiment slowly but surely progressing,” he observed, “so that when final action came, the opposition was not strong enough to defeat the purpose.” To Governor Curtin of Pennsylvania, in recalling the proclamation and the circumstances under which it was issued, the president said: “You see, Curtin, I was brought to the conclusion that there was no dodging this negro question any longer. We had reached the point where it seemed that we must avail ourselves of this element or in all probability go under.”

In justification of his course, Mr. Lincoln remarked to Mr. Colfax: “The South had fair warning that if they did not return to their duty, I should strike at the pillar of their strength. The promise must now be kept, and I shall never recall one word.”

The president had now done that which was calculated to reinstate him in the good opinion of his abolition friends, who were quite freely predict-

ing that the war would end leaving slavery untouched, the monstrous evil it had always been. Owen Lovejoy, himself not too patient under postponements and delays, now found his prophecy fulfilled. "I tell you," he had said in the president's defense, "Mr. Lincoln is at heart as strong an anti-slavery man as any of them, but he is compelled to feel his way. He has a responsibility in this matter which many men do not seem able to comprehend. His mind acts slowly, but when he moves, it is forward. You will never find him receding from a position once taken."

Meantime, to what extent and in what numbers the slaves should be emancipated in the Southern states, was a question, as Lincoln very well understood, depending upon the success of the Union arms. The problem for him to solve was this: Would emancipation promote or retard military operations directly upon Southern fields, or improve the situation by reflex influence upon public opinion in the North, whereby friendly majorities were secured in legislatures, armies were enlisted and sent to the front, and loans negotiated for meeting the enormous costs of war. Liberty in the South was contingent upon battles yet to be fought and won, and slaves in states undisputedly held by the Federals where they might have been emancipated were expressly excepted from the beneficent provisions of the order. Upon this ground the president's sincerity was openly questioned. The English people found proof in the act for their

theory that the war was not a war of emancipation but a mere selfish contest for power. The *London Times* spoke of the proclamation as the "execrable expedient of a servile insurrection." Mr. Lincoln, himself, was not unmindful of the fact that the task was yet but half done. "We are a good deal like whalers who have been long on the chase," he observed characteristically to a friend. "At last we have got our harpoon fairly into the monster; but we must look how we steer, or with one flop of his tail he will yet send us all into eternity."

In his message to Congress in December, 1862, the president indulged in a lengthy, full and earnest discussion of his project for compensating slave masters, proposing a number of amendments to the constitution of the United States. His plans again called for the issue of bonds for long terms, payable in instalments to the states. The terminal period was now fixed at January 1, 1900. The president was at the same time striving to negotiate treaties with South American countries, in which he hoped to gain permission to establish colonies of Southern negroes. But they were not willing to receive such immigrants, and the colored people expressed no desire to go, whereupon Lincoln made a commendable effort to show that deportation was not a necessary consequence of emancipation. He was undergoing a development of mind upon this topic also. He had told a deputation of negroes in Washington in August, 1862: "You and we are different races. We have between us a broader difference than exists

between almost any other two races. Your race suffer very greatly, many of them by living among us, while ours suffer from your presence. In a word we suffer on each side. But for your race among us there could not be war, although many men engaged on either side do not care for you one way or the other. Nevertheless, I repeat without the institution of slavery, and the colored race as a basis, the war could not have an existence. It is better for us both therefore to be separated.”<sup>1</sup> In his message in the following December the president had changed his views to such an extent, that he found the objections urged against free negroes remaining in the country to be “largely imaginary if not sometimes malicious.”

A few negroes who were sent to an island off the Haytian coast by way of experiment must be called for in a ship and brought home again in a very unhappy condition, and the idea of colonization as a philanthropic measure was rapidly losing its adherents. General B. F. Butler recommended that the black soldiers, when the war had ended should be sent to Panama under his command, to dig an isthmian ship canal. “There is meat in that suggestion,” remarked the president. “Go and see Seward.” The Secretary of State also favored the expedition, but on the evening of the day the interview occurred, he was thrown from his carriage and a little later Lincoln was assassinated.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Speeches,” Vol. II, p. 222.

<sup>2</sup> “Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln,” p. 154.

On the whole negro question, the most remarkable reversal of opinion was taking place in the public mind. Sudden transformations like these are explainable by nothing except the element of impulse in the American character. In the autumn elections after President Lincoln's preliminary proclamation, his enemies swept New York and other important states, and large numbers of men in the North would have seen him hanged with ill-concealed satisfaction. At no other time was the Union in so much peril, from Confederates in the South and their Copperhead allies in the North, one vying with the other in the effort to make the president's task impossible. The change of sentiment, when it came, was due to no influence so much as the success of the Federal arms beginning with Grant's capture of Vicksburg and Meade's victory at Gettysburg. Up to this point the South believed itself invincible, and Europe shared its view. The London *Times* declared that the "attempt of the North to restore the Union is as hopeless, as would be the attempt here to restore the Heptarchy," and throughout the year 1863 the president did not know what would be the eventual verdict on his negro policy. So soon as the great "anaconda scheme" began its slow but effectual work of strangulation, the Confederates being pressed into ever narrowing confines, great outlying districts in the West being totally cleared of their troops, and the Mississippi opened to navigation from the Ohio

to the sea, the morals of the people underwent a wholesome revolution. Fighting with negroes, even fighting for negroes was no longer the bugbear it had formerly been. Men, who in each community, cursed and reviled the Abolitionists and informed against the station-keepers upon the Underground Railroad in an effort to enforce the hard provisions of the Fugitive Slave Law, were now Abolitionists themselves. Slaveholders in the South were advocates of emancipation. Those who two or three years before would have cheerfully assisted at the funerals of William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips, were coming into perfect sympathy with them, looking upon slavery as the abomination it ever was and always will be, and eager enough to forget that any other view of the subject had ever been entertained.

In the states which were coming into control of the Federals, the president was face to face with the problems of reconstruction, and new governments were being formed by the military agents sent out from Washington, the soldiers on the ground, repentants, imported traders, settlers and adventurers, and all loyal elements which could be utilized for the work. It is easy to understand why legislatures organized and controlled by a conquering army would emancipate, if that were the command from Washington, but military influence does not explain the revolution of sentiment in Maryland and other border states, which were amending their constitutions and making negroes free. To these

states Mr. Lincoln was still holding out promises of compensation, and had made a suggestion which was disapproved by his cabinet for the payment of four hundred million dollars to all the slave states if they would return to their duty in the Union.<sup>1</sup> Fifteen millions had been named in Congress as a sum in consolation money for the slaveholders of Missouri, but the institution was in the way of being swept out of existence on a cheaper plan. The Senate in April, 1864, passed, by the necessary two-thirds majority, a resolution submitting to the states the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, forever prohibiting slavery on American soil. In June, when it reached a vote in the House of Representatives, although ninety-three members voted affirmatively and but sixty-five in a negative sense, the requisite number lacked and the question remained under discussion in the country at large until the next session. Then in the same Congress the subject was reconsidered. Many Democrats, in view of the result of the presidential election in November, 1864, were willing to change their votes, and on January 31, 1865, the amendment was adopted amid applause, cheers, the waving of handkerchiefs and other demonstrations of enthusiasm which were continued for several minutes both on the floor and in the galleries. Thereupon the House adjourned "in honor of this immortal and sublime event," guns were fired from the batteries guarding the city, and the president,

<sup>1</sup> "Speeches," Vol. II, p. 636.

so often "serenaded," was again called to the window at the White House for a speech to a jubilant crowd. To his proclamation it might be objected that it was unconstitutional, and that it was partial in its operation. "But this amendment," he observed, "is a king's cure-all for all the evils. It winds the whole thing up."

Illinois, the president's own state at once, the next day, February 1st, ratified the amendment. Rhode Island and Michigan followed on the 2d; Maryland, New York and West Virginia on the 3d, and before the month ended seventeen states had voted for emancipation. It was not until December 18, 1865, eight months after Lincoln's death, however, that three-fourths of the states, the constitutional number, several of them being the reconstructed Southern governments, signified their approval.

Nothing so well measures the length of the swing of the pendulum of public opinion on the negro question in these four eventful years, as a reference to the bare text of the amendment, which was submitted to the states by Congress, and recommended for adoption by President Lincoln in 1861, and the Thirteenth Amendment of 1865. In 1861 it was proposed that the constitution should be amended as follows: "No amendment shall be made to the constitution, which will authorize or give to Congress the power to abolish or interfere within any state with the domestic institutions thereof, including that of persons held to labor or service by the laws of said state."



In 1865 the following amendment was adopted :  
“Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.”

## CHAPTER XI

### LINCOLN, THE POLITICIAN

THOSE who knew Lincoln most intimately, are a unit in declaring that he was a master in the art of politics. A consummate politician, far-seeing, shrewd and tactful, no picture of him will ever be complete if it omit this important element in the composition. Regarded by some as guileless and unsophisticated, none lived who did not repent of that judgment. While his rise is often considered to be an accident, the fact that he was at all times the man of the hour, ready at every opportunity to move forward into his assigned place, is something apart from chance. Those who thought him ignorant, were disabused of that idea when they observed the mastery that he gained of whatever subject claimed his intellectual attentions. Those who criticised him for vulgarity, might in the next moment be called upon to admire the elevated poetry of his thought. If any conceived that he was weak, and that he was dominated at Washington by his secretary of state's superior mind, an impression which at first prevailed in England, the South and some parts of the North where the Seward legend died only fitfully, the impression was

corrected by observation, and is scorned by the historian.

A character, incomprehensible for its contrasts to many, even among those that knew it best, Lincoln will always be acquitted of any lack of knowledge and understanding of human nature. He had come up from the people, appreciated their views and aspirations, and could bear with them in all their moods. His aptitude in translating their present opinions and in predicting what these would be in some future year, was greater doubtless than that possessed by any other American statesman. He never could have committed that gross error ascribed to a monarch in Europe who, sniffing the air, in a crowd, exclaimed, "How the people smell!" He assumed an attitude of superiority in reference to no American citizen, despite the complaints of many that he was a despot, denied himself to no visitor, no matter how humble, refused to forget his origins, and but a short while before his death, at a hospital camp near Washington, made fly the chips from a log to recall his youth, and afterward helved the axe, that is, held it out in his right arm horizontally, a feat that none of his companions was able to perform. Nevertheless, it was upon no appeal to his beginnings that he relied for popular support, the studied manner of some American politicians who are "self-made," and of whom it has always been a temptation to inquire why, when they were making themselves, the work had not been done more cleverly. However much

his friends sought aid for him in fence rails and log cabins, he never committed the mistake of asking for votes of poor and ignorant men because he had once been poor and ignorant. He knew the worth of education and the established agencies through which it might be obtained, and without too much faith in the laws of chance, sent his son to one of the best secondary classical schools in New England, whence he made his way to Harvard College.

Lincoln entered practical politics, in a practical country, in a practical age, in his early years. Schooled to the methods most effective in conducting popular campaigns, procuring votes and electing candidates for nearly thirty years in Illinois, some of his acumen still served him in good stead as the president of the United States. It is difficult to know whether most to admire the careful regard which he had for the claims of various geographical sections and various factions of opinion in constructing his cabinet, or the consummate ability with which he managed and conciliated its diverse elements afterward. He publicly declared that he would not be bound by any arrangements made at Chicago with the managers of rival candidates, and yet every important name brought before the convention was tactfully admitted to the list of his ministers. Republican leaders who had contributed to his nomination and election, never had occasion to complain of his ingratitude, and those who could not be placed at home were sent abroad to preside over the American legations and consulates. His

motto, "justice to all," if we except a few cases like that of Mr. Stanton in offices in which present efficiency must be the sole test at the expense of past services, was meant to apply principally to Republicans, and when circumstances permitted to his own unwavering friends. His election was the means of elevating to public position a number of Illinois politicians, whose fame could not have spread outside the locality in which they were bred, but for his fortunate accession to power, whereby they were put into places which in the case of Seward's victory would have been filled by Thurlow Weed. Mr. Lincoln's skill in treating with the New York state leader, and in retaining his friendship, is but another proof of his masterly comprehension of the rules of practical politics. He directed there, as everywhere, without making to be felt the iron inside his gloved hand. Always the master, he treated none as a servant, and won his victories by methods that are worthy of the respect and emulation of all statesmen in democracies.

Again and again, after he was ensconced in the presidency, the California politicians protested because he preferred over their own the recommendations for office coming through Edward D. Baker, nominally a senator from Oregon. Lincoln replied simply that Baker was his friend, a personal obligation of that kind being stronger than any other consideration. He knew his friends, and was inclined to give them all their appropriate rewards. He was not of those who could feel great sympathy

for a civil service based upon any system of examinations, or the tedious and inanimate processes by which men come to their offices through bureaucratic service. "I personally wish Jacob Freese, of New Jersey, to be appointed colonel for a colored regiment," he wrote to Secretary Stanton in November, 1863; "and this regardless of whether he can tell the exact shade of Julius Cæsar's hair." Through the personal influence of Mr. Seward, the nation had very fortunately secured Charles Francis Adams as its representative in England, but most of the posts abroad were, after the manner of the time, bestowed as rewards for political service. A few crumbs fell into other laps. "I have some wish that Thomas D. Jones, of Cincinnati, and John J. Piatt, now in this city," Lincoln wrote to Secretary Seward in March, 1865, but a few weeks before his assassination, "should have some of those moderate sized consulates which facilitate artists a little in their profession. Please watch for chances."

That very many civilian appointments in the army were most unsuitable, and that disgraceful scandals arose in the conduct of the war on its business side, is due less to partisan favoritism than to the total lack of a military system. An effort to create one could not be successful in a short time, especially under the pressure and disadvantage of a contest constantly increasing in its dimensions. The president could not, or at any rate sincerely believed that he could not, solely consider the best interests

of the service in the management of the war, bringing to his work, especially in the early stages of the contest, the manner of the politician rather than of the wise, strong, military leader. He tolerated useless and unsuccessful commanders for expediency's sake long after they should have been dismissed, and had regard—no one will say that he could have succeeded better if at all by adopting another policy—for the effect of each movement upon public opinion. Wheedling, coaxing, advising when the efficiency of the service abstractly considered required immediate supersession, precious time was consumed, and for this waste there was no compensation except that the people were being educated, and their rulers were gaining in experience.

Not a vote was cast in any local election in a Northern or a border state that was without meaning to the president, and that did not bring a command to him to proceed more rapidly or more cautiously, or perhaps to stand still marking time until the millions should come into accord with each other and with him, and permit of another forward movement.

Lincoln had the rare faculty of being able to impress those with whom he came in contact with the fact that he was the living embodiment of their thoughts, feelings, opinions and aspirations. They went from his presence convinced that he was with them and of them, a trait most valuable to a popular leader, and in him ripely perfected. He lacked in dignity and breeding for men who valued

those qualities. He attained objects by tedious methods, and waited too long to satisfy eager people. He told anecdotes to evade issues, cherished intentions that he did not publish, and tempered his speeches for those to whom they were addressed. But with all these characteristics, which will pass for political tact, there was a conviction of great honesty and marvelous benevolence in forming judgments of other men's actions. The president's sympathy was felt, if it were not openly expressed, and a conviction developed that he was doing for the nation the best that circumstances would allow.

Something of the politician's manner is exhibited in Mr. Lincoln's utterances to representatives of religious bodies. That he was not a professing religious man and reserved to himself the right of criticising clergymen who voted against him in Springfield, bishops who became Confederate generals, and Southern churchmen who supported slavery, would seem to make even less fitting the freedom with which he sometimes employed the name of the Deity. To Mrs. Gurney, representing the Society of Friends, Lincoln had described himself with considerable arrogation as "a humble instrument in the hands of our Heavenly Father."<sup>1</sup>

His public documents are pervaded with references to the Divine care exercised over the destinies of governments, in most respects reverent and acceptable. They at the same time suggest an ex-

<sup>1</sup> "Speeches," Vol. II, p. 243.



cessive regard for the supposed feelings of those whom he addressed. It was his task, as he said, to put himself and the government "on the Lord's side," and judged by many declarations Mr. Lincoln's religion must be accounted a search for a powerful ally, whose favors it was hoped he might keep from falling to the other side, rather than a natural, deep-felt serious thing. The God who favored but one side in such a contest, and allowed terrible wars to continue year after year, as the president himself characteristically observed in uncertain moments, was a somewhat inexplicable being. He was obliged often to doubt the existence of a living, intervening Heavenly Power. "You say your husband is a religious man," he said in one of his less reverent moods in response to a Tennessee woman's appeal for the release of a prisoner of war. "Tell him when you meet him that I say I am not much of a judge of religion, but that in my opinion the religion which sets men to rebel and fight against their government because as they think that government does not sufficiently help some men to eat their bread in the sweat of other men's faces, is not the sort of religion upon which people can get to heaven."

The politician is seen, in the president's reply to the committee of Chicago clergymen on September 13, 1862. He observed that for a long time he had been visited by religious men of the most opposite views, all equally certain that they represented the Divine will. "I hope it will not be irreverent for

me to say," Mr. Lincoln remarked to the deputation, "that if it is probable that God would reveal His will to others on a point so connected with my duty, it might be supposed He would reveal it directly to me; for unless I am more deceived in myself than I often am, it is my earnest desire to know the will of Providence in this matter. And if I can learn what it is, I will do it. These are not, however, the days of miracles, and I suppose it will be granted that I am not to expect a direct revelation. I must study the plain physical facts of the case, ascertain what is possible, and learn what appears to be wise and right." Coming as it did only nine days before the Emancipation Proclamation was issued, it must be adjudged to have been a needlessly harsh and evasive utterance to a group of good men, meant to serve a political purpose,—clearly to create the impression that what he was about to do would not be done in answer to the prayers of the clergy and the Abolitionists.

It was the politician's skill which led Mr. Lincoln to appreciate the fact that he must make himself and his party practically coextensive with loyal Union sentiment in all parts of the country. When General Butler received his commission, he said that he did not know whether the president would trust him to a command. He had been the Breckinridge candidate for governor in Massachusetts. "All the better," Lincoln is reported to have said. "I hope your example will bring many of the same sort with you."

“But I do not know,” replied Butler, “that I can support the measures of your administration, Mr. President.”

“I do not care whether you do or not, if you will fight for the country,” was Lincoln’s reply.

His relations with the leaders of the party which had opposed his election, showed the most astute appreciation of the need of giving offense nowhere, and of arming that great body of men without whose aid the Union could not have been preserved. They proved themselves a dangerous force in unsettling the arrangements for the conduct of the war in 1862, and their attitude was still the subject of much solicitude in 1863 and 1864. Mr. Lincoln had reason to be glad of the opportunity to appoint loyal Democrats to prominent places in the army, as it reflected good upon the entire service, in cities and villages where new men were being drafted as well as on fields where seasoned soldiers were fighting the nation’s battles. In not a few instances such appointments were made and such commanders were retained to the disadvantage of the service, especially in the first stages of the war. It was in fear of the charge of partisanship that McClellan was not removed, at a time when he abundantly deserved it, to serve, as it was foreseen that he would, as a leader about whom disaffected men might rally to embarrass the administration. Mr. Lincoln always knew those who were his friends, *au fond*, and they had a place very close to his heart. He suffered others to serve him and

serve him ill for political reasons, but if their loyalty was not made manifest, the relation did not continue longer than necessity required. He learned, as the war progressed, what he knew imperfectly when it began, that in military management, friendship, either personal or political, could have no proper place. Only loyalty to the Union and skill in winning battles counted for anything it was worth while to take into consideration in the direction of great bodies of soldiers on the battle-field, a lesson which, when it was learned, brought Grant, Sherman and Sheridan together in their triumphant combinations.

Politics, the particular bane of all wars in democracies, especially of civil wars, had wrought to complicate purely military problems at every point. It was Lincoln, to use one of his own homely phrases, who applied the hair of the dog to cure its bite. By politics he met and coped with politics, and thus counteracted and averted much, that under less knowing and skilful management, would have brought the country vastly greater disasters than those gigantic, as they were, by which it was oppressed. In the spring of 1864 he gave to one of his trusted agents an evidence of his superb mastery of political tactics. The incident did not strangely impress his friends to whom his methods were so frequently revealed. It was not yet certain to what extent the reconstructed Southern governments could be utilized in making up the total of states necessary for the adoption of the Thirteenth Amend-

ment. Lincoln was anxious to have Nevada admitted to the Union, although its title to statehood is to-day still unclear, and by a little characteristic manipulation, he accomplished his object. Some objections were urged in the House of Representatives, but they did not seem to the president to be insuperable. "It is easier to admit Nevada than raise another million soldiers," said he, and entering the office of Charles A. Dana, assistant Secretary of War, Lincoln exhibited his familiarity with the situation by canvassing practically the entire house, stating how each member would vote upon the statehood question. There were three, he said, two from New York and one from New Jersey whom he wished Dana to "deal with." Dana asked what the men would be likely "to want." "I don't know," the president replied. "It makes no difference, though, what they want. It is a question of three votes or new armies." Whatever promise his agent should make Lincoln promised to fulfil.

Two of the congressmen, it was discovered, would make internal revenue collectorships the price of their adhesion to the measure; the third desired an appointment for a friend in connection with the New York custom-house, which yielded the incumbent perhaps \$30,000 a year. Dana successfully managed the transaction, and thus it was that three votes were secured for the admission of Nevada, so that the state in the next February could be added to the number ratifying the amend-

ment by which slavery was forever abolished on American soil. The custom-house appointment was not made because Mr. Lincoln's death intervened, and President Johnson refused to be bound by the arrangement on the ground that "such bargains tend to immorality."<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless it was a method that Lincoln did not scruple to employ when it would help him gain a desired result.

In 1864 the president and his friends were by no means certain of his reelection. A great deal of diplomacy, and all the power and influence of the War Department were called into requisition to accomplish an object which it is no exaggeration to say had as much to do with the complete extirpation of slavery and the unconditional return of the seceded states as General Grant's operations on the battle-field. Lincoln frequently said that he would retire from his office in favor of any man who could better do the work which the nation had in hand. For a time the Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. Chase, seems to have thought that he was ordained to play this part, and an admirer, Senator Pomeroy of Kansas, issued a circular recommending his candidacy. It was widely distributed, but elicited practically no favorable response from any quarter, and the possibility of opposition within the president's own party was early dismissed as entirely chimerical. Chase, who had many ideas of his own in reference to slavery, which were frequently urged without making too deep an im-

<sup>1</sup> Dana, "Recollections of the Civil War," p. 177.

pression upon Mr. Lincoln's mind, seems now to have thought that the country would benefit by drawing unreservedly upon his fund of wisdom, and he encouraged the movement to bring him forward as a rival for the presidential nomination, until long after all but he were well convinced that the candidate of the Union party would be the man under whom so much that was wholesome and effectual had already been accomplished at Washington.

Singularly enough, the only real opposition to Mr. Lincoln's reelection, in circles in which men's loyalty was beyond dispute, came from the anti-slavery element, early clamorous for radical action, and still impatient at the progress making at Washington for the liberation, the enfranchisement and the full recognition of the negro as the equal of his white brother. They passed the bounds of reason in their unpractical philanthropy, and held a convention at Cleveland, O., on the last day of May, 1864, to nominate a candidate for the presidency. The choice fell upon John C. Fremont who had the sympathy of many of the intemperate, because of his bold and mistaken course in emancipating slaves by military decree in Missouri, his enforced retirement from military service because of his costly errors of judgment as a commander, and his frequent semi-political appeals to the public, whose confidence he had enjoyed as the first presidential standard-bearer of the Republican party. General Fremont accepted the nomination from the hands

of men who denounced "the imbecile and vacillating policy" of the administration. He himself declared that "it would be fatal to endorse a policy and renew a power which has cost us the lives of thousands of men, and needlessly put the country on the road to bankruptcy."

A few voices were raised in behalf of General Grant's nomination for the presidency, but that commander, after his wonted manner, gave his undivided attention to the problem in hand in Virginia, holding himself in an exemplary and soldier-like way, wholly aloof from questions of politics.

"There is but one contingency that can cause your defeat for a second term," one of Mr. Lincoln's friends remarked in 1863, "and that is Grant's capture of Richmond and his nomination as an opposition candidate."

"Well," replied the president shrewdly, "I feel very much about that as the man felt who said he didn't want to die particularly, but if he had got to die, that was precisely the disease he would like to die of."

Meanwhile Mr. Lincoln's friends, dismissing these marks of hostility to his candidacy for a second term as the small absurdities that are characteristic of all popular electoral campaigns, were laying their plans for his renomination at the national convention called to meet early in June in Baltimore. It was a movement which, so far as he was concerned, needed no direction. It was hearty, spontaneous and unanimous. No other candidate



was seriously regarded and the delegates entered the convention from their states pledged unquestioningly to Lincoln for a second term. Efforts were honestly made through Thurlow Weed and others to conciliate McClellan and Governor Seymour of New York, that their influence might be enlisted upon the Union side, but in those quarters the advances of the administration were rejected. Overtures were made to General Butler, in the hope that he might consent to become the candidate for vice-president on the Union ticket, in the appeal for the support of the War Democrats. That so observant a politician as Mr. Lincoln should have regarded Butler as a suitable man with whom to make the running, may be seriously doubted, but the canny and self-conscious general had the pleasure of declining, if we shall admit the right of the delegate to proffer him the important honor.

“Tell Mr. Lincoln,” General Butler remarked to the emissary, who was no other than Simon Cameron,<sup>1</sup> “with the prospects of the campaign I would not quit the field to be vice-president, even with himself as president, unless he will give me bond with sureties in the full sum of his four years’ salary, that he will die or resign within three months after his inauguration. Ask him what he thinks I have done to deserve the punishment, at forty-six years of age, of being made to sit as presiding officer over the Senate to listen for four years to debates, more or less stupid, in which I can take

<sup>1</sup> McClure, “Lincoln and Men of War Times,” p. 106.

no part, nor say a word, nor even be allowed a vote upon any subject which concerns the welfare of the country.”<sup>1</sup>

The convention found in Andrew Johnson of Tennessee, whose loyalty to the Union seemed to be well established by recent important services, a Southern slaveholder, whose past affiliations and present situation, geographically, promised to appeal forcibly to the sympathy of political elements it was desirable to conciliate, a man they were willing to entrust with the second place upon the ticket, though the decision was one that his sponsors long and grievously repented, in view of the comparative ease with which the contest was won and his singular recalcitrancy when, by the chance of crime, he succeeded to an office it was never meant that he should occupy.

It was at the time, however, by no means certain that Mr. Lincoln could be reelected, and the situation wore a particularly ominous aspect as Grant slaughtered his men in vain engagements, and Early, unhindered, raided Pennsylvania and Maryland, and threatened Washington itself in a summer which had little in it to presage the speedy termination of the war. The Copperheads and Peace Democrats, reinforced by those well-meaning people, of large though uncertain number, who were sick at heart because of the ruthless and, as it seemed, unending destruction of human life, bade fair to become a powerful force. As yet no nomi-

<sup>1</sup> “Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln,” p. 158.

nation had been made, although General McClellan was looked to as the natural leader of these disaffected factions. The convention, first called for July 4th, was postponed until late in August. "At this period we had no adversary," said Mr. Lincoln, "and seemed to have no friends." On all sides there were demands for the appointment of commissioners to negotiate for peace with the South upon any procurable terms. Thurlow Weed who was no novice in the study of popular moods and temperaments, told Lincoln and Seward in August, that the administration had "not the slightest hope of success." In the last days of the month the Democratic national convention met at Chicago and, while the delegates were in a state of mental confusion in regard to most questions, they were tolerably well agreed as to the sentiments to be entertained of Lincoln personally. It is a rule in American politics, long remarked in Europe, that you should "never accuse your adversary of ignorance or error; declare boldly that he murdered his grandmother or stole clocks." Lincoln understood the American manner, and always took what was said about him at its true worth, as most of our statesmen are able to do when they are gifted even in a small way with that precious quality, a sense of humor. The president was favored in that respect to a remarkable degree, and added to this trait was patience to wait until other men discovered their mistakes, and overflowing charity.

One delegate at Chicago declared that "for less

offenses than Mr. Lincoln had been guilty of, the English people had chopped off the head of the first Charles." Another arose and asserted that "ever since that usurper, traitor and tyrant had occupied the presidential chair, the party had shouted war to the knife, and the knife to the hilt. Blood had flowed in torrents and yet the thirst of the old monster was not quenched. His cry was for more blood."<sup>1</sup>

A platform contrived by the notorious Copperhead, Vallandigham, which the convention's nominee was compelled to repudiate, declaring that the war had been a failure, and demanding that hostilities should at once cease, gave a feeling of returning confidence to the friends of the administration. Fremont's candidacy never attained a dignity that would allow it to be seriously considered, least of all by President Lincoln who, in the presence of a caller, turned to a Bible, and opening the book dryly read a verse from First Samuel: "And every one that was in distress and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men." In September, Fremont formally retired from the race, while McClellan's pretensions were disposed of effectually by the Vallandigham platform, and the movements of Grant and Sherman who were changing Federal

<sup>1</sup> From reports of the convention in a Chicago Democratic newspaper.

fortunes and making the fact very obvious that the war was in no sense a failure.

Nevertheless nothing could be taken for granted, and no power at hand which could contribute to make the result more certain, was left unexercised. Battles were fought and demonstrations were planned in the field with a view to influencing public sentiment favorably. On September 19th, Lincoln wrote to General Sherman, urging that soldiers be sent home to vote in Indiana, one of the October states where it was desired that the Union majority should be large. "Giving the state government to those who will oppose the war in every possible way, is too much risk if it can be avoided," said the president. "This is in no sense an order, but is merely intended to impress you with the importance to the army itself of doing all you safely can, yourself being the judge of what you can safely do."

There was fear lest McClellan should prove to be a dangerous candidate in Pennsylvania, his native state, and at that time a factor of some uncertainty. A Republican politician went to Lincoln in Washington to say that if 15,000 or more Pennsylvania soldiers were granted furloughs and would come home to vote in their uniforms at their separate polling places, it would be an important influence to create enthusiasm for the Union. It was suggested that he should ask Grant to do this for him, but Mr. Lincoln said that he did not know whether the general-in-chief would be his friend in such a mat-

ter. Then it was urged that he might ask Meade or Sheridan. "Oh," said Lincoln as his face suddenly lighted up with a smile, "I can trust Phil. He's all right."<sup>1</sup> Thus it was that several thousand Pennsylvanians left their commands and returned to their homes, to become an important influence in carrying their state for the Union candidates.

Nowhere, at no time, did Mr. Lincoln commit the mistake of entering the canvass in person, even by offering publicly to discuss political questions. He stated nothing in regard to his future aims, and explained or apologized for no act of the past. His reelection would be an endorsement of the efforts he had made to preserve the Union, and a command to continue on his course. He was not uncertain as to what he would do if McClellan were the popular choice. He would go to the president-elect, offering to cooperate with him in an effort to save the Union before inauguration day. That would have been the government's only chance of salvation, Mr. Lincoln observed, for his successor, whoever he might be, would have secured the election on such terms that it could not possibly be saved afterward.<sup>2</sup> "The general would have answered you, 'yes, yes,'" Seward interposed, "and the next day when you saw him again and pressed your views upon him he would have said 'yes, yes,' and so on forever, and would have done nothing at all."

<sup>1</sup> "Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln," p. xlii; also McClure, "Lincoln and Men of War Times," p. 188.

<sup>2</sup> "Speeches," Vol. II, p. 568.

But McClellan was not elected. In November, not a free state gave him a majority except New Jersey which, with Delaware and Kentucky, yielded the Democratic candidate a total of twenty-one electoral votes, 212 having been cast for Lincoln and Johnson. As a clergyman had observed upon a lighted transparency which hung over his door in Middletown, Conn., the night following the election, "And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time."<sup>1</sup> Lincoln knew the result several weeks before the returns reached him from the telegraph instruments in the War Department, although there were many doubtful days during the summer. He was too astute an observer not to read the signs of the time. The man who had offered to bear the traveling expenses of a friendly Kansas delegate to the Chicago convention in 1860; who put Cameron in the war office, sending him afterward to Russia; who made Judd minister to Prussia; who bore long and patiently with McClellan until that general was condemned by his own devoted troops, and the president was himself more firmly entrenched in their affections than the "Young Napoleon" had ever been; who asked commanders to detach soldiers in order to carry important elections; who, for votes in Congress, bartered internal revenue collectorships and custom-house appointments must be held to have been a politician of the first rank. He employed his powers benevolently for great and

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 22 : 15.

useful ends, but he possessed the same skill which, when it is put to vulgar uses, develops one of the principal evils of American public life. He was a "supreme politician," said Charles a Dana; he was a "master politician" said A. K. McClure, two men not ignorant or unappreciative of the politician as he manifests himself in the United States, and to whom Lincoln revealed these rather unheroic phases of his character.



## CHAPTER XII

### LINCOLN, THE MAN

THE most striking personal trait, that characteristic in Mr. Lincoln which impressed the casual observer most forcibly, was his grotesque appearance. To those who came to know him closely, and saw through the surfaces, his awkwardness of manner and the extreme homeliness of his face were forgotten, the universal experience with reference to one's unhandsome friends. "I knew it was all a Copperhead lie," said a woman who came from the executive mansion with her congressman, after having received a favor at the hands of the president. "Knew what was a Copperhead lie?" asked her companion. "That Mr. Lincoln was an ugly man. He is the handsomest man I ever saw."

Nevertheless, from boyhood, Lincoln had never enjoyed a reputation for beauty, and he was the last to plume himself upon grace of bearing or physiognomy, or the gentlemanliness of his behavior, understanding quite clearly that in all these things he was a law unto himself. Mr. Edward Dicey was but one of the foreign observers who came to Washington during the war, but his description will serve to express the gen-

eral opinion, and differs from the rest only in vividness of detail. "When you have called the president 'honest Abe Lincoln,' according to the favorite phrase of the American press," Mr. Dicey remarked, "you have said a great deal, doubtless, but you have also said all that can be said in his favor. He works hard and does little; and unites a painful sense of responsibility to a still more painful sense, perhaps, that his work is too great for him to grapple with. Personally his aspect is one which, once seen, cannot easily be forgotten. If you take the stock English caricature of the typical Yankee, you have the likeness of the president. To say that he is ugly is nothing; to add that his figure is grotesque is to convey no adequate expression. Fancy a man six foot high and thin out of proportion, with long, bony arms and legs, which somehow seem to be always in the way, with large, rugged hands, which grasp you like a vise when shaking yours, with a long, scraggy neck and a chest too narrow for the great arms hanging by its side. Add to this figure a head cocoanut-shaped and somewhat too small for such a stature, covered with rough, uncombed and uncombable lank dark hair, that stands out in every direction at once; a face furrowed, wrinkled and indented as though it had been scarred by vitriol; a high, narrow forehead and, sunk deep beneath bushy eyebrows, two bright, somewhat dreamy eyes, that seemed to gaze through you without looking at you; a few irregular blotches of black, bristly hair

in the place where beard and whiskers ought to grow; a close-set, thin-lipped, stern mouth, with two rows of large, white teeth and a nose and ears which have been taken by mistake from a head of twice the size. Clothe this figure then in a long, tight, badly-fitting suit of black, creased, soiled and puckered up at every salient point of the figure—and every point of this figure is salient—put on large, ill-fitting boots, gloves too long for the long bony fingers and a fluffy hat covered to the top with dusty puffy crape; and then add to all this an air of strength, physical as well as moral, a strange look of dignity coupled with all this grotesqueness, and you will have the impression left upon me by Abraham Lincoln.”

All his life morbidly sad and boisterously jovial by sudden turns, these characteristics were still marked at Washington. Upon no nature could the responsibilities of the war have made a deeper or more sorrowful impression than upon the president's, and every estimate of the time which raises a doubt as to the profundity of his sympathy for each wounded soldier and stricken family of the slain during four bitter years of war is based upon imperfect knowledge. At some critical periods he was practically inconsolable in his grief. He did not sleep. He haunted the corridors of the White House in a long dressing gown, his head bowed, speaking often to himself in tones of hopeless sadness. F. B. Carpenter, who lived for several months in the executive mansion, while painting

his emancipation picture, described Lincoln's as the saddest face he ever knew. While the battles of the Wilderness were being fought "there were days," he said, "when I could scarcely look into it without crying." At the death of his friends he was almost beside himself with grief. He heard of Senator Baker's death at Ball's Bluff in October, 1861, while standing over a telegraph instrument with General McClellan. Without a word he passed out into the street, the tears rolling down his furrowed cheeks. He so nearly stumbled and fell in his absent-minded despondency, that the war correspondents sprang forward to catch him. When his little son, William, died in February, 1862, he often sobbed at his desk, fell into the deepest melancholy whenever the loss was mentioned, and Mrs. Lincoln for a time was sincerely alarmed for his mental condition.

His clemency and charity, to call it by its right name plain kindness of heart, were not easily reconcilable with his resolute attitude in the conduct of the war. His friendly sympathy went out to the poor and men and women in any kind of affliction. He tempered war's hard necessities at every point at which his personal influence could be exerted by modifying the brutal exactions of the service, and multitudes came to the White House upon every kind of business, especially regarding the release of prisoners and the commutation of harsh sentences. He denied himself to no one, and exposed himself as his friends often re-

minded him to very unnecessary annoyances and risks. "As for myself," Mr. Lincoln replied to all such observations, the true democrat he always was, "I feel though the tax on my time is heavy—that no hours of my day are better employed than those which thus bring me again within the direct contact and atmosphere of the average of our whole people. Men moving only in an official circle are apt to become merely official—not to say arbitrary—in their ideas and are apter and apter with each passing day to forget that they only hold power in a representative capacity. Now this is all wrong. I go into these promiscuous receptions of all who claim to have business with me twice each week, and every applicant for audience has to take his turn as if waiting to be shaved in a barber's shop. Many of the matters brought to my notice are utterly frivolous, but others are of more or less importance, and all serve to renew in me a clearer and more vivid image of that great popular assemblage out of which I sprang, and to which at the end of two years I must return."<sup>1</sup>

Lincoln called these receptions his "public opinion baths." They were notable in bringing forward a great number of persons who had suffered by the war and who wished to describe their grievances to the president in person to increase his constitutional fund of sadness. Attorney-General Bates complained that "should the applicant be a woman, a wife, a mother, or a sister in nine cases out of ten

<sup>1</sup> Carpenter, "Six Months at the White House," p. 281.

her tears, if nothing else, are sure to prevail." The signature "A. Lincoln" upon a paper overruling an order issued by the regularly constituted military authorities, often aroused the anger of Secretary Stanton and generals in the field, who felt that executive intervention was disturbing to the service. It prevented the enforcement of discipline. Commanders like Butler besought the president not to interfere with the regular processes of martial law, and Stanton more than once fumed about in his impulsive way because appeal was taken from his decrees and requests that he had refused were granted. The lease of life of many poor fellows was extended, and acts of kindness and mercy in behalf of prisoners under sentence were performed repeatedly in response to personal appeals.

Once when there was a question as to the sanity of the prisoner, a boy confined at Elmira, N. Y., the president sent a reprieve by telegraph over no less than four different lines, so anxious was he to prevent the execution of the sentence. In January, 1864, Governor Hoadley of Ohio telegraphed that a deserter was to be shot the next day without a submission of the facts to the president. Mr. Lincoln remarked that while the case was "really a very bad one" he had already commuted the sentence to imprisonment during the war at hard labor. "I did this," he added, "not on any merit in the case, but because I am trying to evade the butchering business lately."

One day an attractive looking young woman

came to the White House and obtained an interview. By her story it appeared that the day after she was married her husband, whom she addressed as Fred, had been obliged to rejoin his command. Later he obtained leave to go home for the honeymoon. While absent, a peremptory order to return to the service was issued in preparation for an important movement. The young man, in his absorption did not see it, and upon returning to his regiment was dismissed. The bride came to plead for his reinstatement. "You say, my child," the president replied in his fatherly way, after listening to the tale in quizzical amusement, "that Fred was compelled to leave the day after the wedding. Poor fellow, I don't wonder at his anxiety to get back, and if he stayed a little longer than he ought to have done we'll have to overlook his fault this time." Lincoln gave her a card to Stanton who after his manner rebuked her for taking such a matter to the president and refused the request. Returning to the White House for a second interview she met Lincoln on the stairway. "Well, my dear, have you seen the secretary?" said he. "Yes, Mr. Lincoln, and he seemed very angry with me for going to you. Won't you speak to him for me?" "I shall see that the order is issued," the president replied. It was issued, and the pathetic sequel to the incident is that the young man laid down his life in the Union service on the field of Gettysburg.

An old man came to the White House to say that

his son, who was in General Butler's command, would be shot on a certain day unless the president, in his mercy, would forgive the offense. He had come a long distance. Lincoln regretted that he could do nothing, for just yesterday he had received this telegram from Butler: "I pray you not to interfere with the courts-martial of the army. You will destroy all discipline among our soldiers." Lincoln watched his visitor's grief and then exclaimed, "I jings! Butler or no Butler, here goes," and wrote his order: "Job Smith is not to be shot until further orders from me. A. Lincoln." The old man, reading these words, was disappointed. He had come for a pardon. "My old friend, I see you are not very well acquainted with me," Lincoln explained consolingly. "If your son never looks on death till further orders come from me to shoot him, he will live to be a great deal older than Methusaleh."

In one case Butler, notorious for his severities, seems himself to have doubted whether a sentence should be carried into execution, whereupon Lincoln looked up and said: "You asking me to pardon some poor fellow! Give me that pen!"

To Speaker Colfax, in justifying a course that sterner men criticised, the president observed: "It makes me rested after a hard day's work if I can find some good excuse for saving a man's life, and I go to bed happy as I think how joyous the signing of my name will make him and his family and his friends."



Mr. Lincoln was loth to punish innocent Confederate prisoners for cruelties practiced upon Federal negroes. Being recommended to retaliate in kind for the sufferings that Union soldiers were compelled to undergo in Southern stockades, he said : "Whatever others may say or do I never can, and I never will be accessory to such treatment of human beings."

His labors as a peacemaker between leaders of hostile political factions, between members of his cabinet, and in defense of Union generals when their action subjected them to public criticism, were among the greatest of his services at the White House. Disaffected politicians, leaders of delegations bearing resolutions passed at public meetings, and men of all sorts with plans for the better conduct of the government and the more successful prosecution of the war, were patiently heard, their objections met and their anger allayed. Although the public, except that part of it which was always devotedly friendly, grew increasingly impatient, early in 1862, for McClellan to move upon Richmond, the president contented himself with the remark that if the general did not want to use the army he would like to borrow it provided he could see how "it could be made to do something." After the betrayal of Pope, Lincoln was still magnanimous and declared that, "there is no one in the army who can man these fortifications and lick these troops of ours into shape half as well as he can." On another occasion, in his charitable way,

he was heard to say of McClellan: "So pleasant and scholarly a gentleman can never fail to secure personal friends. In fact

" 'Even his failings lean to virtue's side.'

A keen sense of genius in another and a reverence for it that forced expression was out of place at Fair Oaks, as beautiful things sometimes will be. He was lost in admiration of General Lee, and filled with that feeling, forbore to conquer him. The quality that would prove noble generosity in a historian does not fit the soldier."<sup>1</sup>

There were three occasions in the course of the war when Lincoln's disappointment was grievous, and his forbearance seemed to be on the point of exhaustion. These were when McClellan failed at Malvern Hill to advance upon Richmond and closed the Peninsular campaign, when Hooker did not support Sedgwick at Chancellorsville, and when Meade neglected to follow and attack Lee at the bend in the Potomac after the battle of Gettysburg. But, he observed afterward philosophically, no word of censure escaping his lips, that with shells shrieking in his ears, he might have acted as those three generals did. He was constantly called to intercede in behalf of his impetuous Secretary of War, and bore with the greatest tolerance with Mr. Chase while that secretary used his cabinet place as a stepping-stone to the presidency.

Singularly contrasted with the constitutional sad-

<sup>1</sup> Carpenter, p. 227.

ness and the almost womanly sensitiveness of Mr. Lincoln were other traits of character, his firmness and rude strength, his frequent outbursts of mirth and his banality. There were many times when he was strong even against feminine appeal. A woman who came to Washington from a town in Virginia, complained that a church had been seized by the Union army for use as a hospital. "As there are only two or three wounded soldiers in it," said she, "I came to see if you would not let us have it, as we want it very much to worship God in." Lincoln answered that there would be another battle in all likelihood in that neighborhood very soon, "and my candid opinion is," he added, "that God wants that church a great deal more for poor wounded Union soldiers than for Secesh people to worship in."

A man came and bitterly denounced Secretary Stanton. The president, according to Mr. Colfax, replied: "Go home, my friend, and read attentively the tenth verse of the thirtieth chapter of Proverbs," which upon investigation proved to be: "Accuse not a servant to his master lest he curse thee and thou be found guilty."

His reply to a delegation of New Yorkers, said to represent \$50,000,000 in money in their own persons, who came to Washington to implore the president to protect the city from bombardment by Confederate cruisers was decisive. "Gentlemen," he said, "I am by the constitution commander-in-chief of the army and navy of the United States, and as a matter of law, I can order anything done

that is practicable to be done ; but as a matter of fact I am not in command of the gunboats or ships of war—as a matter of fact I do not know exactly where they are, but presume they are actively engaged. It is impossible for me, in the condition of things, to furnish you a gunboat. The credit of the government is at a very low ebb. Greenbacks are not worth more than forty or fifty cents on the dollar, and in this condition of things, if I was worth half as much as you gentlemen are represented to be, and as badly frightened as you seem to be, I would build a gunboat and give it to the government.”

One day a delegation called upon the president to ask for the appointment of a friend to a consular position in the Sandwich Islands. The recommendation was made, they explained, because of the man's fitness for the post and also because of the state of his health, which necessitated his living in a place blessed with a balmy climate. Lincoln listened attentively. “Gentlemen, I am sorry to say,” he remarked finally, “that there are eight other applicants for that place and they are all sicker than your man.”

Three men who came again and again to sell the United States a new torpedo which, in their opinion, would quickly bring the war to an end were referred to Secretary Stanton, the chief of ordnance, the general-in-chief of the army, and at last returned to Mr. Lincoln rather insolently demanding a reply to their proposals. Thereupon the president pro-

ceeded to relate with elaboration the story of a boy in the West who went to Sunday-school. He reached the chapter in which is recited the trials in the fiery furnace of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. He was unable to remember their names, and was reproved repeatedly for his stupidity in learning them. One day, having again got to the difficult place in the lesson, the teacher said: "Now tell me the names of the men in the fiery furnace." "Oh," said the boy, "here come those three infernal bores. I wish the devil had them."

A woman in an imperious mood is said once to have visited President Lincoln. "Mr. President," she began in a declamatory style, "you must give me a colonel's commission for my son. Sir, I demand it, not as a favor but as a right. Sir, my grandfather fought at Lexington. Sir, my uncle was the only man who did not run away at Bladensburg. Sir, my father fought at New Orleans and my husband was killed at Monterey." "I guess, madam," Lincoln replied dryly, "your family has done enough for the country. It is time to give somebody else a chance."

The most peculiar of the inconsistencies of Lincoln's character was the boisterous mirth that would fill him immediately after a fit of the most painful despondency, and the lack of breeding he displayed in relating a vulgar anecdote when thousands were dead or dying on the battle-field and the fate of the nation was hanging by a slender thread. In the depths of distress, pacing the floor after a night of

sleepless anxiety and self-reproach, an hour later, very likely, he was telling a Western anecdote, and laughing loudly at the jest with callers who pressed in from the anteroom in which men and women sometimes sat for days together, awaiting the opportunity for an audience. The distant, dreamy look vanishing from his eyes, his legs crossed, his hands locked over the knees, his tall frame rocking to and fro with uncontrollable merriment, he related his jest, very often to the amusement of his guests as well as of himself, but sometimes too to their secret if not unconcealed displeasure. "That laugh," one of his callers remarked as it echoed through the White House, "has been the president's life preserver." He was once heard to say that he believed he would die but for the relaxation that came from the reading of Artemus Ward, P. V. Nasby, Orpheus C. Kerr and the relation of humorous stories. One always reminded him of another. The president's "That reminds me of a story," came to be a jocular phrase in all parts of the country. It was the subject of laughter when he and Mr. Seward met the Confederate commissioners at the Hampton Roads conference; it was a part of the comedian's stock in trade at the theatre the night of Mr. Lincoln's assassination. His melancholy returned after a sally of this kind with surprising rapidity, indeed as suddenly as it had disappeared.

"They say I tell a great many stories," the president observed to a friend. "I reckon I do, but

I have found in the course of a long experience that common people"—repeating the words—"common people, take them as they run, are more easily influenced and informed through the medium of a broad illustration than in any other way, and as to what the hypercritical few may think, I don't care." The president also found the anecdote-telling art a great convenience when, as often happened, it was necessary to avoid committing himself positively on difficult issues. "When men bred in courts, accustomed to the world, or versed in diplomacy, would use some subterfuge or would make a polite speech or give a shrug of the shoulders as a means of getting out of an embarrassing position," said William H. Russell, "Mr. Lincoln raises a laugh by some west-country anecdote, and moves off in the cloud of merriment produced by his joke."

It was not because the president chose to enforce truths through anecdote that he was criticised, but because his stories were so inelegant, and because inappropriate occasions were so frequently selected for the telling of them. Mr. Lincoln's friends have endeavored in vain to prove the unexceptionable character of his anecdotes by repeating many that he undoubtedly told, though it is quite certain that not a few were ascribed to him that never passed his lips. Illustrations serve but to deepen the unfavorable view with those who are discriminating as to their standards of elegance in thought and expression. His stories related for the most part, to

ploughing, Irish laborers, darky boys, coons, reptiles, lice, skunks, monkeys and animals, objects and scenes which do not come within the range of attention of well-bred men. It was amid such surroundings that he had lived in Kentucky, Indiana and Illinois, and his allusions were naturally to things most familiar to him. Every man's language, if it be not an affectation, is a reflection of his thoughts, and one's thoughts are of what one has seen and experienced. While some argued that there was no occasion when a president could properly relate such stories as his, many more wished that if he must tell them, he would make better choice of the times for indulging in them. In such a matter a president may be given little advice, and the disapproving scowls of Secretary Stanton, Senator Wilson of Massachusetts and others who listened, often quite unwillingly, never served as the correctives they were intended to be. He would begin a cabinet meeting, called to face some great crisis, by reading aloud from the writings of Artemus Ward and received the returns of the election at the War Department in 1864, to the intense disgust of its secretary, with hilarious laughter evoked by the letters of the humorist Nasby, which Mr. Lincoln carried in a pocket or in his hat, and frequently brought forth in the hope that they would amuse others as much as they always amused him.

Senator Wilson once brought Goldwin Smith and a group of reverend Englishmen to introduce them



to the president. Mr. Lincoln wore slippers that exhibited blue socks. It was one of those occasions, when upon the approach of his guests, he slowly drew his feet from distant parts of the room, and beginning to rise, continued that movement, until he looked down on all about him. He inquired for the health of John Bright, and then proceeded to relate an anecdote about "darky 'rithmetic." While he had been quite apt in welcoming William Howard Russell, the American correspondent of the London *Times*, remarking of that newspaper that it is "one of the greatest powers of the world ; in fact I don't know anything which has much more power except perhaps the Mississippi," he was by no means so successful upon the occasion of the visit of the Marquis of Hartington. "Hartington! Hartington!" exclaimed Mr. Lincoln, catching at the name. "Why that rhymes with Partington."

The version of the remark which he made in reply to the British minister when the latter presented himself to deliver Queen Victoria's announcement of the betrothal of the Prince of Wales, seems quite incredible, although it is said to have a basis of fact. Lord Lyons, who was a bachelor, visited the White House with Secretary Seward, and after delivering his message as the queen's minister, he was solemnly addressed by the president of the United States as follows: "Lord Lyons, go thou and do likewise."

When Seward resigned in 1862 because of Chase's presence in the cabinet, and Chase was induced to

follow the example, the president exclaimed in glee : "Now I can ride. I have got a pumpkin in each end of my bag."

On November 19, 1863, Lincoln followed Edward Everett, who was the orator of the day, in a short address at Gettysburg, at the dedication of the national cemetery, where the soldiers slain a few months before were laid, many of them in nameless graves. On this occasion, he asked the nation to reconsecrate itself to the great tasks of the war, recommending "that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion ; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain ; that this nation shall have a new birth of freedom ; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth." By one eulogist the address is compared to the Sermon on the Mount. It is asserted that it was written on a piece of pasteboard on the president's knee, while on the train on the way to the battle-field, although Lamont alleges that it was brought out of its author's hat, where it had been placed for safe keeping, after deliberate preparation earlier at Washington. General Fry, who had been detailed by the War Department to escort the president to Gettysburg, upon going to the White House, found that Mr. Lincoln was not yet ready. As but a little time remained before the train's departure, it was suggested that he should make haste. The president proceeded to tell a

story. "I feel about that," said he, "as the convict in one of our Illinois towns felt when he was going to the gallows. As he passed along the road in custody of the sheriff, the people, eager to see the execution, kept crowding and pushing past him. At last he called out: 'Boys, you needn't be in such a hurry to get ahead. There won't be any fun till I get there.'"<sup>1</sup> When he sat down after the delivery of this beautiful and immortal address the president, thinking he had not done himself credit, turning to his friend Lamon said: "Lamon, that speech won't scour."

The allegation which was published in the newspapers that the president, accompanied by several friends, visited Antietam in a wagon while slain Union soldiers still lay about the field unburied, Lamon singing negro melodies at Lincoln's request, was incorrect only in the matter of time. The visit was made several days after the battle, and the dead had all been placed in their graves. The president called for a song to raise his spirits in a place of sorrowful memories.

Great battles were fought, thousands fell on the field, the enemy threatened Washington, but Lincoln curiously alternated his deep and sincere anguish with unbridled gayety. That large numbers of men should have misunderstood his character and looked upon him as not a few did, as a Nero who fiddled while Rome was burning, need not occasion great astonishment.

<sup>1</sup>"Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln," p. 403.

That a man, sometimes the saddest and at other times the most mirthful, a man who rose in a moment from vulgar things to great nobility, this moment weak before a woman's appeal and the next firmly executing a great war measure, should exhibit other sharp contrasts of character, is not in the least degree surprising. Another incongruity of Mr Lincoln's composition is to be found in his use of the English language. In one speech or letter his style is of a perfect purity, while in another it is of a quality beneath an educated man's contempt. A speech that will be a model of chaste English so long as the language lives, was followed very likely by some deliverance which showed that his learning was a garment not long before assumed, and that in relaxation he was constantly ready to revert to the Illinois frontier type, which but for great emergencies he still faithfully represented. He "guessed" and "reckoned" instead of thinking, knowing and believing. He asked the Union generals to pursue the enemy and "pitch into him," and once instructed Grant to "hold on with bulldog grip, and chew and choke as much as possible." To Hooker he wrote on one occasion: "I would not take any risk of being entangled upon the river like an ox jumped half over a fence, liable to be torn by dogs in front and rear, without a fair chance to gore one way or kick the other."

When the representatives of the National Union League came from Baltimore, after the Republican Convention's adjournment in that city in 1864, to

congratulate Mr. Lincoln upon his nomination for a second term, he told them that the honor had fallen to him not because he was the greatest or best man in America; it was rather, said he, because the convention had concluded that "it is not best to swap horses while crossing the river, and that I am not so poor a horse but that they might make a botch of it in trying to swap."

Speaking as a lawyer another time, he said that he supposed the people thought he had "managed their case" well enough to trust him to "carry it up to the next term."

To a crowd which, with a band of music, on January 31, 1865, came to the White House to congratulate him upon the adoption by Congress of the Thirteenth Amendment, Lincoln, appearing at a window over the portico, observed that "the great job is ended."<sup>1</sup>

On July 7, 1863, in response to the serenaders who came so often, he referred to the victories at Gettysburg followed by the surrender of Vicksburg to Grant on the Fourth of July, which was a fitting day, he remarked, for "the cohorts of those who opposed the Declaration that all men are created equal" to "turn tail and run." Continuing, he said: "These are trying occasions, not only in success, but for the want of success. I dislike to mention the name of one single officer lest I might do wrong to those I might forget. Recent events bring up glorious names and particularly prominent ones,

<sup>1</sup> Arnold, p. 366.

but these I will not mention. Having said this much, I will now take the music.”<sup>1</sup> Speeches so commonplace in sentiment and ungrammatical in structure cannot well be reconciled with the Gettysburg address, the second inaugural or the letter he wrote to Mrs. Bixby of Boston, a printed copy of which is preserved in a conspicuous place in one of the colleges at Oxford. The letter reads:

“DEAR MADAM :

“I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the adjutant-general of Massachusetts, that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the republic they died to save. I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

“Yours very sincerely and respectfully,

“ABRAHAM LINCOLN.”

Beneath this letter the college authorities have appended this comment, “One of the finest specimens of pure English extant.”

Of Lincoln’s second inaugural address on March 4, 1865, the London *Spectator* remarked: “We cannot read it without a renewed conviction that

<sup>1</sup> “Speeches,” Vol. II, p. 366.

it is the noblest political document known to history. . . . Surely none was ever written under a stronger sense of the reality of God's government. And certainly none written in a period of passionate conflict, ever so completely excluded the partiality of victorious faction and breathed so pure a strain of mingled justice and mercy."

The closing sentences of this address are as follows :

"Fondly do we hope,—ferverently do we pray,—that the mighty scourge of war may pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn by the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said 'the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.' With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right, let us strive as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

Declared by high critical authorities to have been "one of the greatest masters of English prose," he yet could fall to the most slipshod thought and the commonest utterance, and was guilty of the descent at times of vast meaning and solemnity.

It is not to be expected that any man can live his life at an exhibition pitch. Relaxation must come from time to time, and he is especially prone to chafe under higher discipline, if the position is an acquired and unnatural one. When account is taken of the cares and responsibilities that the nation heaped upon him to weary his mind and oppress his spirits, Mr. Lincoln's average must be held to have been remarkably high. His aberrations were fewer as his character was developed and enlarged in his last years. The wonder is not that he sometimes fell, but that he ever could, with the means at hand, rise to the noble heights upon which he often stood.

It will always be asked how it is that a man so little disciplined in the art of writing, and with a relatively narrow acquaintance with literature, could have gained so notable a mastery of the English tongue. He opened few books, but what he read he remembered, and if it fitted his moods it remained with him. The poem beginning, "Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud," was almost a part of him. He was particularly fond of the first and last groups of verses :

"Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud ?  
Like a swift-fleeting meteor, a fast-flying cloud,  
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave  
He passes from life to his rest in the grave.

"'Tis the wink of an eye—'tis the draught of a breath  
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death,  
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud ;—  
Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud."



Lincoln also frequently recited Oliver Wendell Holmes's "Last Leaf," dwelling upon the fourth stanza,—

"The mossy marbles rest  
On the lips that he has prest  
In their bloom,  
And the names he loved to hear  
Have been carved for many a year  
On the tomb."

He enjoyed a fugitive poem beginning,—

"Tell me ye winged winds  
That round my pathway roar,  
Do ye not know some spot  
Where mortals weep no more?  
Some lone and pleasant vale,  
Some valley of the west,  
Where free from toil and pain,  
The weary soul may rest?  
The loud wind dwindled to a whisper low  
And sighed for pity as it answered, No."

Ballads gleaned from newspapers and accidental sources lingered in his mind if they touched some sad, responsive chord in his nature. He knew Shakespeare, but not all of the plays. His favorite was Hamlet, where he found the guiding principle of his life—

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends  
Rough hew them how we will."

He repeated frequently and with visible enjoyment the soliloquies in Hamlet, Macbeth and Rich-

ard III. Upon one occasion, when some Scandinavians were brought to meet him at the White House, he surprised them and their sponsor by reciting a poem descriptive of the rugged beauties of Norse scenery, long cherished in his memory, though the source had been forgotten.

What was not sad in his reading, as in his own nature, was riotously humorous, and he knew the work of all the men who extracted fun from the war. For him there was no literature between antipodal points—tragedy and Petroleum Nasby. He told Senator Harris that he had never read a novel through in his life, although he had once begun “Ivanhoe.”

Lincoln's style was so good because it was so natural. It was not shaped in a mind confused by much indulgence at the founts that are supplied by the tireless modern printing press. Helped by Shakespeare, the principal source of his inspiration was the Bible, of which he was an attentive student. He quoted from the Scriptures with great ease and accuracy. His literary manner has that terse purity and direct force acquired in no surer way than by study of the Scriptural writings, and adherence to their models. Mr. Lincoln owed much of the nobility of his thought to the hours and days he had spent with the First of Books, and from that source, too, came his standards of literary form which, when he chose to be true to them, yielded results that will always assure him a preeminent place among the masters of English prose writing.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE END OF THE WAR

WHEN Grant, with those cabalistic initials, "U. S.," that wags surmised might make his name Uncle Sam, Unconditional Surrender, Use Sambo and several other things, still untried in larger fields, was brought on from the West to receive his lieutenant-general's commission and assume direction of all the armies of the United States, he at once took his place at the front with the Army of the Potomac. He was no bureaucrat, and it was not a stage of the war in which such a commander was needed. Scott fought battles while lying upon a couch in Washington; McClellan when he was not parading upon a horse was a social lion in drawing-rooms, or the centre of a group of anti-administration politicians; Halleck, Stanton and Lincoln could direct battles at a telegraph instrument in front of wall maps. The need now was for an unflinching fighter, with a prestige gained by great victories, and in Grant was found embodied the traits which it was thought would lead to the early capture of Richmond and the surrender of the army that continued to hold the Confederate capital so defiantly. There was a suggestion that he should attempt to break the backbone of the Confederacy by leading

an invasion of the South at the head of the Western armies, a command afterward delegated to General Sherman. But this plan did not meet with his favor. He chose still to make Virginia the centre of the contest, outside operations being incidental and contributory to the long sought object of so many campaigns.

The war was now to be conducted on a great scale, in terrible earnest. By means of vast combinations with generals in different positions, the chief of whom were Sherman and Sheridan, whose worth Grant had discovered in the West, attacks were directed at vital points of the Confederacy. The military machine was soon working with the precision of a clock. Lincoln surrendered practically all care of the details of field management, and entrusted the task to Grant, who at once became the comprehending genius wherever a man wore the blue uniform. The president indeed, with a view to secrecy and more effective service, preferred that he should be left in ignorance of intended movements.

The commissariat of the Army of the Potomac, while it had not reached this position without dishonesty and fraud upon the public treasury, was of remarkable efficiency. *Matériel* was forwarded with perfect order and despatch. The baggage trains which brought up the rear extended for twenty or thirty miles. The army itself was the best, as it was the largest body of seasoned soldiery ever brought together upon the American con-

minent, and although the Northern people felt that they had already made all the sacrifices that should be required of them, Lincoln ordered a draft of 500,000 more troops in July, 1864, and a little later called upon the states for 500,000 volunteers, a demonstration of untouched resources that probably did more than any other one thing to shake the resolution of the Confederate leaders and convince them of the hopelessness of the struggle they had so inadvisedly undertaken. It was Grant's plan "to hammer continuously against the armed force of the enemy and his resources until by mere attrition, if in no other way, there should be nothing left to him but an equal submission with the loyal section of our common country to the constitution and laws of the land." Everywhere on the great map of war, commanding generals were to engage the enemy simultaneously and permit of no massing of troops at single threatened points on the line of Confederate defense.

The most important movement not directly under Grant's eye, was Sherman's invasion, the objective of which was Johnston's army, that might be met somewhere in the heart of Georgia. The general-in-chief, in the meantime, with Meade and the Army of the Potomac, numbering about 120,000 men, would move upon Lee with more than 60,000 on a selected route, likely sooner or later to lead them into Richmond. In the night on the 4th of May, 1864, the march was begun upon the Confederate capital, the army being led by Sheridan

in command of large troops of horse. Thus the Rapidan was crossed and Lee, selecting that dark and tangled wood, appropriately called the Wilderness, as his place of defense, pushed his soldiers into this natural shelter, that he and his generals knew as well as though they had been its regularly appointed keepers and foresters. It was the same thicket that had served so well against Hooker in the battle of Chancellorsville. Here in this bloody cock pit of Virginia the armies met among the scrub trees, matted together with briery vines, a jungle that the unknowing could not traverse. Detachments, lost to the view of their comrades, were compelled to fight single handedly. After two days of murderous combat among the impenetrable underbrush Grant sending Sheridan on a detour by which the cavalry swept up to the gates of Richmond, aimed to march around Lee by way of Spottsylvania, but his advance met there a strong division of Confederate troops, very soon reenforced and fortified, and buttressed on knobs and hills in a practically impregnable position.

Grant's motto, which was the simple rule of action of a famous Russian general, "Advance and strike," led him to choose a direct offensive movement in spite of obvious obstacles. He assaulted this natural fortress with the cool and hopeful tenacity that was his strongest characteristic, regardless of the fate of his men. He wrote to Washington that the result was in his favor, and that he proposed "to fight it out on this line, if it

takes all summer." Day after day, for a fortnight in May, except when operations were interrupted by rain and miry and impassable roads, the two armies met without apparent gain for either side. The dead lay in heaps, entrenchments were taken at the point of the bayonet, great trees were cut off like reeds by the shot, thickets were set ablaze to incinerate the wounded, prisoners were taken on each side in hand-to-hand encounters, in what Grant himself said was the most desperate fighting ever witnessed on this continent. The carnage had only begun, although nearly 40,000 men, a third of the great army with which Grant started out had been killed, wounded or captured. On one day, the 12th of May, at Spottsylvania, the Union loss was 6,000 men.

Undiscouraged, it was still Grant's hope to pass Lee and get into Richmond by the northern route, which resulted in another sanguinary and wholly unsuccessful battle, from the Federal standpoint, at Cold Harbor. The army was led out for its final assault upon the works after some preliminary skirmishing on the 3d of June at early dawn. In a few hours the Federals lost between 5,000 and 6,000 soldiers, and repulsed at practically every point, by men impregnably entrenched, fighting with appalling fury, Grant was obliged this time to confess that he had been terribly defeated. Earthworks were not to be stormed before Richmond as they were at Chattanooga, merely by the spirit of the troops and the pugnacity of their com-

manders. Within five miles of the Confederate capital, he was unable to get in and was compelled to change his tactics, opposing earthworks with earthworks and turned his attention to the development of his plan for an attack upon the city from another direction. He would move upon Petersburg, Richmond's back door. He would go beyond his object and attack the strongly fortified bastion ten miles up the Appomattox from City Point, where that river joins the James, and twenty-two miles south of Richmond, taking it by surprise, if possible, by the slow processes of siege, if compelled to adopt that course.

Petersburg contained about 18,000 inhabitants, and it stood in such strategical relation to the capital, as military men recognized very well, that Lee would evacuate the city when robbed of this important fortified base. Although the army passed around Richmond with skill, celerity and the necessary secrecy, the Union commanders were not fortunate enough to reach Petersburg in time to possess themselves of it without stubborn and prolonged fighting. In June, 10,000 more men fell before the entrenchments with which Richmond was protected. From the crossing of the Rapidan until July 1st, the Army of the Potomac had lost 50,000 men in killed and wounded, which with the missing, increased the sacrifice to 61,400. The Army of the James had lost 7,000 men, and regiments of sick were sent home or to the hospitals as a result of the most arduous and, as many thought,



the most brutal campaigning ever indulged in by a civilized commander on a modern battle-field.

A New York newspaper declared that Grant had provided "either a cripple or a corpse for half the homes of the North." Lincoln's grief after the battles of the Wilderness could scarcely be assuaged. He walked his room with tears in his eyes. "Why do we suffer reverse after reverse?" he broke out. "Could we have avoided this terrible bloody war? Was it not forced upon us? Is it ever to end?" The ambulances, coming into the field hospitals, established on the hills overlooking Washington, arrived in continuous trains from this terrible slaughter-pen. The president, with Mrs. Lincoln, gave a personal care to the sick and wounded, taking the hands of many of the men and uttering words of sympathy, comfort and cheer. But often as he drove along the line he gave up to his despair. "I cannot bear it. I cannot bear it," he exclaimed to those nearest him. But all things must be borne. The war must be ended and it could not be ended, as the exertions of one general after another had testified, by any moderate measure or temporizing expedient.

The summer was not productive of important results for the army under Grant's immediate direction. For nearly seven weeks no rain fell upon the parched fields and dusty roads of Virginia. No movement could be carried out without raising a thick dust that clouded the vision and filled the nostrils of man and beast suffocatingly.

A great mine was dug under the Confederate works by a regiment of Pennsylvania coal miners, who were skilful in shafting and tunneling, and on July 30th it was exploded with four tons of powder, leaving a monstrous crater into which were thrown heavy bodies of Union troops. But few who entered ever came back. Many of them being negroes, were shot down mercilessly by the Confederate gunners. The movement was marked by stupid mistakes, which led to the relief of Burnside from further command.

The successes of the year which cheered the popular heart, raised the hopes of the president and made his reelection a certainty, came from other quarters on the map of war. Sheridan's operations in the Shenandoah Valley, Sherman's capture of Atlanta and Farragut's spectacular victory in Mobile Bay, changed the national temper from gloom to joy. General Lee in order, if possible, to induce Grant to relax his grip at Petersburg and withdraw a portion of his investing force, despatched Early on a daring raid, which had for its object the capture of Washington. To shrewd observers, the movement had appearance of being precisely what it was, a last card in a game already lost. The Shenandoah Valley was not only a rich feeding ground for the Confederates, but also a protected highway, through which they swept again and again at will on their way to Maryland, Pennsylvania and to the back door of Washington. Their secure possession of this avenue into the heart

of the North, until Sheridan was specially assigned to the task, had not been disturbed. Early, in the summer of 1864, was sent north through the valley to threaten the Federal capital and, if possible, possess himself of it, since it was known that its defenses were practically bare of experienced troops. He soon appeared in front of the city, having reached its outer bastions from the west and north, after completing the circuit that southern raiding forces had so often made before. Maryland and Pennsylvania towns were compelled to pay him ransom money under penalty of pillage, crops were stolen and buildings burned, and he had almost unimpeded passage up to the gates of Washington, where from a fort, President Lincoln, in person, observed the skirmish which led him to think better of his enterprise, although within sight of the dome of the capitol, and to betake himself southward again. His train was heavy with plunder, but he was allowed to return with impunity to his own country. Once again the invader made his escape, to send forward a little later another force of troops to harry Pennsylvania and Maryland, still assured of a safe line of retreat.

To destroy this most valuable line of communication, Grant entrusted General Sheridan with a movement that speedily had signal results. Still but thirty-three years old, this far-seeing, cool and discreet, but dashing cavalry leader received the brief command to "go in." "Nothing should be left to invite the enemy to return," said Grant.

The valley was to be converted into a "barren waste." In a little while—after the battle of the Opequon—Sheridan was able to pen his famous despatch: "We have just sent them whirling through Winchester, and we are after them tomorrow." But like all Union victories at this stage of the war it was an expensive one, and Early's force was not yet dispersed. It reformed, and strengthened by reinforcements, while Sheridan's army was busily occupied in destroying bridges and seizing provisions, and the redoubtable little leader himself had gone to confer with the War Department at Washington, the Confederates made an assault upon the Union lines at Cedar Creek that promised to be a severe disaster to the men in blue. Sheridan learned of the catastrophe his troops had suffered while returning to his army, through fugitives he met at Winchester. He rode back on his black charger through his retreating lines, inspiring and commanding his men, until at the front he changed by the force of his personal presence the tide of battle, reformed the stragglers into effective regiments, recovered all the ground which had been lost in the first impulse of surprise, and recaptured many Federal prisoners and guns. He was now in secure control of the important portions of the valley, the darling of the president and the hero of all the loyal parts of the Union.

Meanwhile, in August, Admiral Farragut entered Mobile Bay, and in a sensational naval battle closed that port to Confederate commerce, a performance

that awakened the liveliest satisfaction in the North, one more event pointing inevitably to the end of the frightful war, which recalling the words of Hannibal to Scipio in our fourth readers, had demanded in tribute upon both sides "such costs and pains, so many fleets and armies, and so many famous captains' lives."

But the achievements of Sheridan and Farragut did less to strengthen President Lincoln's position with the people than the successful march of Sherman into the heart of the South which culminated in the capture of Atlanta in the first days of September. General rejoicing, marked by the pealing of bells and the discharge of artillery, accompanied the announcement of the unqualified success of a movement that meant so much to the North in the work of breaking up the Confederacy. The iron had now been run into the vitals of the rebellious section, and Sherman with the repose, likened by the Confederates to that of a tiger, was impatient to be off to the sea, for the campaign upon which his reputation as a commander will always largely depend in the popular mind. For that feat he will be praised on one side and bitterly reproached on the other, but whatever the final verdict, his raid was a powerful influence in deciding the great issue. On November 16th, with 60,000 picked men, stripped of all needless paraphernalia he went in, no one knowing where he would come out, since telegraphic communication was purposely broken off. To the tune of "John Brown's

Body," regiment after regiment catching up the refrain, this remarkable march was begun. A man who met Lincoln in Washington in a dreamy reverie was obliged to touch him to gain his attention. "Oh, excuse me," the president exclaimed as he awoke, "I was thinking of a man down South," afterward explaining that it was General Sherman who so fully absorbed his thoughts. In December, 1864, when he despatched Colonel Markland from Washington with the mails for Sherman's army, to be delivered when it should reach the sea, Lincoln was asked if he had any personal message. "Say to General Sherman for me," he replied, "whenever and wherever you see him, 'God bless him, and God bless his army.' That is as much as I can say and more than I can write." He held his messenger's hand for a long time, his lips trembled, the tears welled into his eyes, and when Markland looked back after his leave-taking, the president was still standing like a statue, as in mute prayer for the success of the great military operation.

Marching through a rich land, feeding upon the corn, sorghum, yams, pigs and chickens which foraging parties, sweeping wide areas and opposed only by ineffective bodies of Confederate irregulars brought into the camps each evening, the army moved forward irresistibly, destroying railroads, factories, shops and every Southern resource calculated to prolong the war, until it reached Savannah, which Sherman was able to present to President Lincoln as a Christmas gift, after a month of re-

markable experiences for every man engaged upon the expedition.

It was a bitterly cruel war. The poor and defenseless felt its terrible brutalities in the South ; but the North itself was not spared the suffering and indignity that come of great taxes, conscription, widowhood, orphanage and broken homes. When the first detachments of Union soldiers crossed the Potomac in 1861, and the Virginians complained that the Yankees were emptying the hen-coops and skimming the cream from pans of milk in the spring-houses, old General Scott held up his hands in horror. "It is deplorable, it is deplorable," he exclaimed. Now Sherman's troops were sweeping a belt many miles in width with the zest of men out for a holiday, and robbing it of every edible thing, burning mills and tearing up railroads, to pile the rails upon blazing heaps of sleepers and twist them while red hot into figure eights and lovers' knots around the trunks of forest trees. Sheridan was converting the rich Shenandoah Valley into a "barren waste." Grant's cavalrymen were raiding, burning and devastating, and in July, 1864, he urged that the troops should "eat out Virginia clear and clean so that crows flying over it for the balance of the season will have to carry their provender with them." The North looked on in admiration at its brave generals, so true is it that one cat will be praised for doing that which another cat will be killed for looking at. The war, said a European observer, was "begun by

madmen and carried on by devils." "When this cruel war is over" became the very feeling refrain in a popular song, and magnificent in their determination to yield nothing until every possible resource had been spent, both sides were pressing on to the end.

Grant remarked that "the rebels have now in their ranks their last man. The little boys and old men are guarding prisoners, guarding railroad bridges and forming a good part of the garrisons on entrenched positions. A man lost by them cannot be replaced. They have robbed the cradle and the grave equally to get their present force."

Federals and Confederates were brother white men, brother Americans. They had been of the same national feeling before the war; they would be again. As "Yanks" and "Johnnies" they visited each other on picket duty, and exchanged newspapers, tobacco and camp stories. They met as friends at brooks and springs to fill their canteens, scampering back to their entrenchments to face each other as enemies at the first signal for the resumption of hostilities. When Commander Le Roy of the Federal *Ossipee* met and compelled the surrender of Commander J. D. Johnston of the Confederate ram *Tennessee* in Mobile Bay his first salutation was, "Hello, Johnston, old fellow. How are you?" And when Seward left Hunter after the Hampton Roads Conference with a "God bless you," the sentiment was in both men's hearts, in spite of the savage comment of a Richmond news-



paper that the benediction of Satan were better than that of Mr. Lincoln's Secretary of State.

Lincoln continued to share the joy of all victories and the remorse of each defeat, though the latter now rarely came to the Federals. He visited the camps, and once while riding along General Butler's lines, needlessly exposed his tall and conspicuous figure to the enemy's pickets not three hundred yards away, always preserved against sharpshooters and common assassins, as though under some miraculous spell. Grant remained in his position before Petersburg throughout the winter, in practical inactivity for one hundred days. The weather was cold. The officers made their quarters in buildings constructed of timber and the camp resembled a city.

The demands for peace, before peace, upon the terms that President Lincoln desired, was at all possible, took an imperative form. Horace Greeley, rendered restless and excitable by the devouring assaults daily made upon the mental system by journalism, again gained a considerable degree of notoriety in the summer of 1864 by his peace mission. The editor of the New York *Tribune* had been approached by intermediaries who, it was said, awaited a conference on the Niagara frontier. It turned out that the delegates were entirely unauthorized, the whole movement being designed to put the president in the position of making advances to Richmond in behalf of a cessation of hostilities and compromise.

Other efforts as aimless and fruitless followed Mr. Greeley's. Early in 1865 Francis P. Blair, Sr., was provided with a passport, and secured interviews with Jefferson Davis and other Confederate leaders which were edifying to Mr. Lincoln, although he shrewdly disclaimed all responsibility for the mission, except for the writing of the pass which might have been furnished to any man. The direct outgrowth of Mr. Blair's visit to Richmond was the designation of Alexander H. Stephens, vice-president of the Confederacy ; R. M. T. Hunter, ex-Confederate Secretary of State and John A. Campbell, assistant Secretary of War as commissioners to confer with representatives of the Union on the subject of peace. The three men were courteously received by General Grant, who was instructed to postpone no military movement because of the approaching conference, and Seward was sent to Fortress Monroe to meet the Southerners. Lincoln himself, upon Grant's recommendation, joined his Secretary of State, and they received Davis's delegates in the saloon of a steamer at anchor in Hampton Roads on February 3d, where a discussion was indulged in lasting for four hours, and covering the principal questions in difference between the two sections, such as the return of the Southern states to the Union, amnesty, slavery and the partition of Virginia.

When these men had last met it was as friends, citizens of a common country which was the object of their mutual pride. Three of them now

pretended to be citizens of a new republic. Lincoln and Stephens had not seen each other since they were in Congress together as Whigs in 1849. Seward and Hunter had last touched shoulders in the United States Senate. It was a meeting to be remembered, a time for reminiscence which, as all accounts agree, was freely indulged in, though not at the expense of serious debate. It was soon discovered by Lincoln and Seward that the Southern people, in so far as the officers of the Confederacy still represented popular feeling, were not yet ready to return to their affiliations upon any conditions which the North could suitably entertain ; by the Southern commissioners that the North was unwilling to accept, as they expressed it, anything less than the unconditional submission that came of conquest. They returned to Richmond to issue a last appeal to Southern heroism, while Lincoln and Seward made their way back to Washington to set in motion, with Grant's aid, the last wheels and levers in the relentless machinery which had been devised for ending the war.

Grant's force was now so superior that he could man all his lines and at the same time execute formidable side movements. Lee, in Richmond, had been so far surrounded, his railroads torn up and his lines of communication broken, that his position daily became less and less tenable. Already in February he knew that the city must be evacuated, and was careful to guard his only remaining avenue of escape. Sherman, after resting

at Savannah, continued his triumphal raid northward through the Carolinas to make it more sure that Lee would not escape from the toils. The "great anaconda scheme" of 1861 was being worked out in 1865, the Confederates being surrounded and impounded in the states of Virginia and North Carolina. Sheridan demolished the last vestiges of Early's army in the Shenandoah Valley and raided Virginia at will ; so closely did Grant press upon Petersburg, that on a Sunday morning early in April, while Jefferson Davis was at church he learned that Lee's lines had been broken in several places, and that army, civil officials and all the paraphernalia and baggage of the Confederacy must be moved at once to safer ground, where a stand might yet be made against the powerful enemy.

The hope was of brief duration. Lee failed to receive the stores needed for the subsistence of his troops, and it was impossible to feed upon what the country yielded. The Federals were too fleet of foot for the fugitives. They harried the Confederate rear and flank, and detached whole regiments to make them prisoners. Finally a large force having planted itself on the south side of the retreating army at Appomattox Court House about seventy miles west of Richmond, Lee surrendered unconditionally to General Grant on April 9th, leaving on the map of war little to be feared but Johnston's army, soon to be in the hands of General Sherman.

Grant did not halt to feast his eyes as many a conqueror might have done upon Richmond, the

object of his long campaign, but Lincoln entered the city. In the closing days of March the president visited the army, as he often did when anxiety impelled him to mingle with the troops, and he thought that his counsel could be better given by his presence on the ground. He had the good fortune literally to be in at the death of the hunted Confederacy. With a small guard of marines who rowed him to a wharf in a barge from a United States warship, pale and without appearance of exultation, he walked to Capitol Square where the Stars and Stripes had been planted by a body of Federal cavalymen, and watched the negro troops extinguish the flames that had already laid in ruins parts of Secessa's capital, fired by its desperate citizens. He visited that sink hole of suffering, Libby Prison, Jefferson Davis's late headquarters, and bowed to the negroes who everywhere so respectfully saluted him as their liberator, while the wonderful Southern women frowned and pouted, when they did not actually shake their small fists at him from behind the shutters of their second story windows. Many slaves, it is said, leaped into the air at sight of him, embracing and kissing each other with shouts of "Glory! Glory! Bress de Lawd. Bress de Lawd." One ragged old man whose crisp, white hair protruded from the crown of a dilapidated straw hat, kneeled upon the ground and clasped the president's hands with a feeling supplication, "May de Lawd bress and keep you, Massa Presidum Linkum."

## CHAPTER XIV

### ASSASSINATION

THE Confederates States of America had received no more severe blow than the reelection of President Lincoln in November, 1864, and his inauguration for a second term in the following March. No very impressive formalities sealed the compact the loyal part of the Union had entered into to prosecute the war to a successful termination under the management which they had criticised, but withal had trusted during the four past years. It was no time for political rejoicings; public interest was centred in military operations, particularly in General Grant, who, if he had taken the flower of the land as a sacrifice, was rapidly winning the nation that victory over rebellion which it yearned for in the deeps of its soul. Although Andrew Johnson took the place of Hannibal Hamlin as vice-president, a change that soon assumed an unexpected portent, Lincoln's administration was not interrupted by that provision of the constitution by which the political calendar is marked off into quadrennial periods, and most of his ministers continued to serve him in their accustomed places.

He at last had in view a time when he could en-

joy the fruits of his policies. He was a man made great by that powerful aid to greatness, success, which he had done much by personal endeavor, guided by rare talent and a suitable temperament to achieve, but which could not have been his were he not favored by the irresistible logic of events and the cooperation of other remarkable minds. A time was drawing near when men need be slaughtered, homes made miserable, the peaceful pursuits of life neglected no more. The vision was at hand of a reunited, greater, stronger, wiser nation over which, at the expressed popular desire, Mr. Lincoln would preside for four happier years, the crowning period of his unusual term of public service. He had borne more for his country than any man who had worn the blue uniform upon any military field. The lines of care furrowed his countenance, and his tears, as he dreamed and sighed and worried in the intervals when he was not the incarnation of robust, manly strength and comical buffoonery, fell often to bathe the altars of the republic which demanded of him more than it had any right to expect of the human nature pressed into the form of one man.

He was more thoughtless of his own safety than a president should be, even in times of profound peace. Conspicuous by reason of his size, mode of dress and peculiarity of movement, he was a fair mark for Confederate sharpshooters when near the military lines, or for misguided miscreants in going to and from camps and even while living his daily life in Washington. That he expected death as

some writers assert, evidencing the remarks that occasionally passed his lips, for instance in the presence of Harriet Beecher Stowe to whom he said, "I shall not live to see the end ; this war is killing me," is a natural conclusion from a knowledge of a character so essentially fatalist.

At no time could he have felt great dread of death. He passed secretly through Baltimore when repairing to Washington for his inauguration to avoid the dangers of assassination, but the change of programme was made only upon the urgent solicitation of his friends, and against his own inclinations. He was constantly in receipt of threatening letters, but as he said one time "they have ceased to give me any apprehension." Men went in and out of the White House with little restraint. Public receptions were held at frequent intervals, and the crowds were given only cursory surveillance. His friends advised him that there were many who would like to see his tall form dangling from a lamp-post, but he took practically no heed of their warnings. Noah Brooks used to relate that early one morning he met the president at the gateway of the White House. "Good-morning, good-morning," said the chief magistrate of the nation, "I am looking for a newsboy. When you get to that corner I wish you would start one up this way." While they were waiting for a carriage to go to a photographer's shop the artist Carpenter says that a farmer from some remote part of the country, with his wife and two little boys, came up and eyed



Mr. Lincoln curiously. He asked if he might take the hand of the president, who democratically granted the privilege, speaking kindly to the man's wife and sons. Such incidents were of almost daily occurrence in Lincoln's life at Washington. He would visit the departments unattended, and without escorts or guards drove or walked abroad in the streets by day or night very heedlessly. "If they kill me," he remarked one day, "the next man will be just as bad for them, and in a country like this where our habits are simple, assassination is always possible, and will come if they are determined upon it. Do you think the Richmond people would like to have Hannibal Hamlin here any better than myself?"

The presence of guards, he thought, would serve only to suggest to the evil-minded the thought of attack. "It would never do for a president to have guards with drawn sabres at his door," he remarked to Mr. Halpine, "as if he fancied he were, or were trying to be, or were assuming to be an emperor." A small squad of cavalry being detailed, without his request, to accompany him to and from the Soldiers' Home, some distance out of Washington where he had his summer residence, he complained that he and Mrs. Lincoln "could not hear themselves talk" for the clatter of the swords and spurs. In January, 1862, he wrote to Secretary Stanton, in response to the suggestion that he be attended by the adjutant-general saying that it would be "an uncompensating encumbrance both to him and me.

When it shall occur to me to go anywhere," the president continued, "I wish to be free to go at once and not to have to notify the adjutant-general and wait till he can get ready. It is better, too, for the public service that he shall give his time to the business of his office and not to personal attendance on me."

At no time did he subject himself to greater peril of person than when, accompanied only by a few sailors with carbines, he ascended the James River, walked a mile and a half into Richmond, only lately vacated by the Confederate army and its government, at the moment in the hands of incendiaries and drunken men, reveling in the alcohol that at Lee's departure was poured into the gutters. No enterprise could well have been more foolhardy; none could have testified more eloquently to the small estimate Lincoln placed upon the value of life to himself or to the nation. He was preserved to meet another death.

Leaving the late capital of the Confederacy on April 5th, he returned to Washington, whither he hastened in response to the unhappy news of Secretary Seward's fall from a carriage by which disaster that official was disabled for public service. On his way he visited the soldiers in the hospitals at City Point, grasping many hands and saying many kind and comforting words. Brought back to face the perplexing problems that attended the return of the Southern states to their old places in the Union and the treatment to be accorded those

who had so long borne arms against the Union, his character for forgiveness and benevolence asserted itself with all its native strength. He cherished no animosities or hates, and his noble temperament impelled him to desire the return of the seceded states to their old relations with the least possible humiliation to the people who had failed, and were to live henceforth in brotherhood with those who had succeeded. The grinning joy of vengeance he never knew. It had no place in his composition, and it was never a temptation to him to gratify a disposition that vast numbers of Northerners felt and would have indulged in with the zest of Shylocks demanding the last pennyweight of flesh in retaliation for the costs and pains of the war which had been forced upon the nation. The feeling against the Southern leaders, particularly against the Confederate president, as the embodiment of the spirit of rebellion was savage, and "John Brown's Body," whose contagious notes had so long rung through the country was now revised, with the recommendation that Jeff Davis be hanged "to the sour apple tree." Lincoln's influence, in so far as it could be exerted in the few days yet remaining to him, was clearly and positively against retributive punishment. He again resorted to anecdote. To General Grant who had asked whether Davis should be captured the president said: "About that I told him a story of an Irishman who had taken the pledge of Father Matthew. He became terribly thirsty and applied to a bartender for a

lemonade. While it was being prepared he whispered to him, 'an' couldn't ye put a little brandy in it all unbeknown to meself.' I told Grant if he could let Jeff Davis escape all unbeknown to himself to let him go. I didn't want him."

Another time he illustrated his desire for Davis's escape by a story of a pet 'coon, which belonged to a boy in Springfield. The animal was very troublesome, and the youngster was asked why he did not get rid of him. "Hush!" said the boy, "don't you see he is gnawing his rope off? I am going to let him do it, and then I will go home and tell the folks that he got away from me."

The very day of the assassination a report reached Washington that Jacob Thompson, the Confederate leader, was in Portland, Me., where he would embark for Liverpool. Young Charles A. Dana, assistant Secretary of War, came to Lincoln to learn the president's wishes in the case. "What does Stanton say?" Lincoln asked. "Arrest him," replied Dana. "Well," the president continued in a drawling tone, "I rather guess not. When you have a white elephant on your hands and he wants to run away you had better let him run."

The Confederate commissioners in the saloon of the steamer at Hampton Roads told Lincoln that they were in no great fear of being hanged while he was president, so general even in the South had become the appreciation of his personal kindness and clemency.

What added influence President Lincoln could

have been in the nation's mood, "to temper the pride of victory," as the British Minister of Foreign Affairs so happily expressed the thought in an address in the House of Lords, is a problem that by a most deplorable crime was forever relegated to the realm of fancy and speculation. For some time, with amazing openness, John Wilkes Booth, a young actor of wide acquaintance through his family connections, his easy manners and graceful personal appearance, rather than by any recorded achievement of his own upon the stage, consorted with a group of evil-minded and hare-brained persons with a view to abducting or assassinating the president and his principal advisers. The plot was hatched at taverns and other resorts, and, with any suitable detective service, should have been discovered before the conspirators were able to give effect to their terrible resolves. The president's open disregard of the ordinary precautions that a chief magistrate should observe, and the feeling of security given by the grateful knowledge that the war was now at an end, made Booth's way easy.

The 14th of April was the day Sumter had been evacuated four years before, and the same flag and the same garrison commander who fought under it were the leading figures in an impressive ceremony in Charleston. The Federals were in the midst of their celebrations in honor of Lee's surrender. It was Good Friday, Lincoln and Grant were together during the day in Washington, the president's son, Robert, who had been upon the general's staff in

Virginia, having come to the capital with his chief. Incidents of the campaign were recalled, when business of an official nature was not being regularly transacted, and in the afternoon the president and Mrs. Lincoln went out for a drive, during which he spoke of the relief he felt at the approach of peace, and his intention at the end of his term of office to travel, later resuming the practice of the law in Springfield. In the evening, at Mrs. Lincoln's desire, they were to occupy a box at Ford's Theatre and witness a performance of "Our American Cousin," a comedy of that class which diverted the president's sad and dreamy mind. General and Mrs. Grant were to have accompanied them, to satisfy the public curiosity to see the war's heroes at this fortunate hour, but they were compelled to leave the city before night, and Mrs. Lincoln invited instead Miss Harris, the young daughter of Senator Harris and her affianced lover, Major Rathbone. The announcement reached the public during the day, and Booth quickly formulated his plans, called upon his lieutenants, assigned them their parts in this tragedy of his own making, fired by the examples of the stage that flitted through an ill-regulated brain, and prepared to avenge the South, as he pretended to think. No secessionist of any position had a hand in this diabolical conspiracy, and only loathing was felt for the perpetrators of the cowardly deed after it was performed. It was dictated, however, by partisanship and ranks in history as a political crime.

Booth, by his acquaintance with the stage and the people of the stage, found a theatre the best of all places for carrying out his insane projects. He entered the playhouse without exciting suspicion, having previously made a bar for a door to prevent interference with his plans, once he had gained access to the box, and bored a hole in a partition through which to point his weapon, if his nearer approach were prevented. A fleet horse stood at the stage door without, to carry him away from the scene of the crime, that was certain to put an outraged nation in motion at his heels.

His plans worked perfectly until he turned to escape. He placed his pistol at the president's head, a shot rang forth, the assassin leaped out of the box but caught his spur in the folds of a flag with which the railing was draped and broke his leg, though the accident did not prevent him from brandishing his bloody knife, dripping from the arm of Major Rathbone, who had instinctively endeavored to seize the man and shouting "sic semper tyrannis," the state motto of Virginia, like some ghastly apparition disappeared from the stage. It was several seconds before any one, actor or auditor, could understand what had taken place; a minute or two before it was known that the president had been mortally wounded. He was removed to a house across the street, unconscious from the first, though he lingered from a few minutes past ten, when the shot was fired, until twenty-two minutes past seven the next morning,

surrounded by his wife and son, several friends and the surgeons, through whose minds flitted the thought that Stanton so forcibly expressed, as the heart ceased beating and death was at hand, "Now he belongs to the ages."

While this bloody drama was being enacted in the theatre, Booth's conspiracy was being worked out with horrible results at still another point. The lieutenant, to whom he had committed the task of assassinating Mr. Seward, had found the Secretary of State on his bed still suffering from the wounds sustained in the carriage accident while Lincoln was at Richmond. The man entered the bedroom, stabbed the secretary in the face and neck so brutally that his life was despaired of, wounded Frederick W. Seward, his father's assistant in the Department of State, it was thought mortally also, and left the ravages of his knife upon three other inmates of the house who had barred his passage, finally, like Booth, disappearing upon a horse. The fate of none of the miscreants was very long in doubt. Booth himself, the jagged bones of his broken leg puncturing his flesh at every leap of his steed, finally found a doctor to set the limb, but after eleven days of liberty was surrounded in a barn in Virginia, which was set on fire, and he, visible through the flames, was shot in the back of the neck by a cavalry sergeant and brought forth to die about three hours afterward.

The nation was shocked in every part by this terrible tragedy, the first assassination of a presi-



dent in the republic's history. The crime created unmeasured amazement, which gave place to resentment and then to an expression of deep love and reverence for the great leader who had lived to see his work completed, but for whom there were tasks still imperatively demanding his wisdom, experience, conciliatory spirit and, most of all, his unexampled talent in directing and managing the people. The corpse was taken to the White House, then to the capitol, and finally it was placed upon a train to be carried over the route Mr. Lincoln had come to be inaugurated four years and two months before, through Harrisburg, Philadelphia, New York, Albany, Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo, Cleveland, Columbus, Indianapolis, being viewed by hundreds of thousands of Americans, who sadly and gratefully whispered his name, praised him for his plain, manly goodness, and recited his public services, until it arrived at last on the morning of May 3d, in Springfield, where the next day it was interred in ground at Oak Ridge, the town's northern suburb selected for the purpose by his old friends and fellow citizens. There, where he would be, were his own wishes known, he rests to-day under a great monument shortly erected by popular subscription.

What he could have achieved in assuaging the bitterness of the next few years by his generosity of heart and the power of his personal influence over mischievous factions, is a matter of interesting conjecture. If, as some believe, Lincoln would have

been less happy in his treatment of the questions it was the nation's task to solve from 1865 to 1870, his repute as a statesman will be held to have gained by his death. This proposition is open to serious doubt, and few, who study the period to-day, are ready to accord greater wisdom to Andrew Johnson, who took the oath of office a few hours after Lincoln's death, and began a tactless administration, that set party against party in strife that terminated only at the end of the term. As the misunderstanding increased between the president and Congress, each side became more obstinate and unreasoning, and the nation was altogether deprived of anything approaching statesman-like guidance at a time when its requirements were sore. Factionalism was rampant, and the South's gaping wounds were reopened and salted and resalted by corrupt and vengeful men.

No one can believe that Lincoln in his second term would have been else than he had been in his first—conservative, calm, considerate, learning as he proceeded and in the final judgment wise. That he would have enfranchised the negro and gone with the country to the full length of that mistake is reasonably certain, but we know nothing of his feeling on this question except as we are informed in his private letter of March 13, 1864, to Michael Hahn, the first free state governor of Louisiana. He raised the question "whether some of the colored people may not be let in," as voters in that state. "They would probably help in some trying time to come,"

he observed, "to keep the jewel of liberty within the family of freedom." How he could have reconstructed the Southern states and brought them back to their former allegiance without Northern agents is not easy to comprehend, but he might at least have had better fortune in the selection of those agents.

With hatred of slavery and the liberator of the negro that he was, Lincoln was not an Abolitionist before the war, nor anything but a moderate on the negro question while the conflict raged between the sections. He issued his edict of freedom as a war measure, and on no ethical or sentimental grounds. He instinctively treated negroes as men and women endowed with all human rights and attributes when they appeared at his public receptions or sought audience with him anywhere. That the negroes mourned his death there is much testimony which trenches upon the bounds of romance and does not belong to the sober record of history. In the streets of Charleston, when the news of the assassination reached South Carolina, a correspondent of the New York *Tribune* met an old negress wringing her hands and moaning,—“Oh, Lawd! Oh, Lawd! Massa Sam’s dead! Massa Sam’s dead!” “Who’s Massa Sam?” a soldier asked. “Uncle Sam’s dead. Massa Linkum’s dead,” she explained, still continuing her lamentations. However deep, discriminating and universal the grief of the negroes may be assumed to have been, it must not be forgotten that many of the slaves looked forward to freedom and

separation from their masters with sincere misgivings. Unused to self-help in the simplest affairs of life, they contemplated the change in their condition with no great satisfaction, and not a few continued to live as they had lived, in their former social relations except for the mere technical matter of ownership. Their grief at his death more fittingly expressed the loss they would feel, because of their too hasty introduction to all the responsibilities of citizenship by other men when Lincoln's commanding grasp relaxed, than the regret inspired by anything he had positively done in the act of emancipation. Mr. Halpine's verses voiced the sense of appreciation and sorrow felt by Mr. Lincoln's plain people :

His towering figure, sharp and spare,  
 Was with such nervous tension strung,  
 As if on each strained sinew swung  
 The burden of a people's care.

His changing face what pen can draw ?  
 Pathetic, kindly, droll or stern,  
 And with a glance so quick to learn  
 The utmost truth of all he saw.

Pride found no idle space to spawn  
 Her fancies in his busy mind,  
 His worth, like health or air could find,  
 No just appraisal till withdrawn.

His most fitting epitaph was found in the line written by a friend a few weeks after his death,—  
 "He bound the nation and unbound the slave."

THE END

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